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## VIOLENCE

REFLECTIONS ON THE PHENOMENON  
OF VIOLENCE

*K. Luke*

A THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF  
REVOLUTION

*Sixtus Thundethil*

STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE, HUMAN RIGHTS  
AND THE RIGHT TO PROTEST

*Varghese Manimala*

CHURCH'S TEACHING ON VIOLENCE

*George V. Lobo*

VIOLENCE AND STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE

*Felix Podimattam*

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## Editorial

The eschatological promises of the Bible, namely, freedom, peace, justice, reconciliation, amount to more than a private affair. They constantly pose a challenge to our social responsibility. They can hardly be identified with any given social situation, although we move towards their realization only in and through social situations. Thus social situations are provisional and our attitudes towards them should be critical in the light of the eschatological promises. In other words, our commitment to Christ generates a constantly fresh critical attitude towards our social environment in terms of the eschatological promises.

Therefore we can hardly see history as something static and creation as a finished product to be preserved as such at all costs. History has a direction under the designs of God. In the light of the Bible we see this direction as pointing towards greater freedom, justice and love. In the process of working out this direction, God meets with resistance especially in the form of oppressive and unjust social structures which amount to institutional violence.

As people committed to God and to the establishment of his kingdom, what concrete forms should our commitment take in regard to the oppressive social systems and structures that obstruct God's work? How should we live and act in the face of violence? Can violence be used against violence? These are some of the questions that will find tentative answers in this issue of the *Jeevadharma*.

K. Luke gives his reflections on the Phenomenon of Violence. Presenting a number of illustrations he points out that history can be legitimately called a record of human violence, of man's inhumanity towards his brother. Even India, which has been acclaimed as a land of ahimsa and tolerance, is no exception to this. To hope for a total elimination of violence is an illusion but what we can do is to try to mitigate human destructiveness through every possible means.

In the context of the widespread misery unleashed by

oppressive Socio-economic structures, the theology of revolution is gaining greater momentum. As a natural reaction against the traditional and existential theologies that have been unduly personalistic, it attempts to interpret Christian faith in view of a just society. Sixtus Thundathil contemplates the socio-political message of Jesus and in its context situates the theology of revolution.

There are many who accuse the Church for its ambivalent approach to the problem of violence — while the Church has vehemently opposed violence by the oppressed classes for their liberation, it has not as much opposed the violence perpetrated by unjust structures and oppressors. George V. Lobo examines at length the Church's teaching on violence and shows that the Church has always upheld the Gospel ideal of peace and non-violence and that its teaching has definitely contributed to the refining of the moral conscience.

We cannot live without structures. But once they become all powerful and oppress the human person they lose all value. Varghese Manimala exposes the different types of structural violence that are at work in our society. The Church today needs a revolutionary ideology. In an oppressive situation in which people are denied their basic human rights, we have to protest and raise our voice. The author thinks that in a violence-ridden society it is almost impossible to bring about changes without recourse to certain form of violence.

In a welter of violence, what should be the attitude of the Christian, how should he/she live and act in such a situation? This is what I am trying to discuss. Non-violent resistance is the Christian way par excellence since the essence of Christian religion is love, including love for the enemy. Non-violence, however, should not be construed as passivity in the face of evil nor should it be considered a panacea for all problems regarding violence.

A human is naturally prone to meet violence with violence, but it is the brute way, not the Christian way. The Christian believes that every man/woman is a potential child of God, with eternal destinies. He/she cannot be brushed aside or done away with at one's whims and moods. So every kind of violence has to be carefully weighed and counter-balanced. That is what we have tried to do in this issue of *Jeevadharma*,

Felix Podimattam

# Reflections on the Phenomenon of Violence

Writers who deal with the problem of violence often cite the following words of the French philosopher M. Merleau-Ponty<sup>1</sup>:

For, by hiding violence one grows accustomed to it and makes an institution of it.

According to Merleau-Ponty civilization is threatened not by killing of persons for their ideas but by disguising violence as something else; hence the need to hold open and free discussions on the phenomenon of violence<sup>2</sup>.

## I. Violence as a datum of History

A most mysterious and mystifying fact about man is the twofold tendency operative in him, namely, the unbounded capacity for self-denial and self-sacrifice, for heroic acts of victory over selfishness<sup>3</sup>, and the equally unbounded capacity for violence and destructiveness, and for finding in it pleasure and satisfaction. In point of fact, man derives the maximum of satisfaction from violence and cruelty and finds a horrifying sight most fascinating: the badly mutilated body of a man is an object of attraction, so much so that people come from far and wide to have a look at it. In the Nazi gas chambers there were peepholes meant for the authorities to observe naked men, women and children writhing in agony and dying<sup>4</sup>. This human behaviour is to be contrasted with that of animals which, when they happen to see the carcass of their own kind, or one of their species dying, move away with some sort of feelings of awe, reverence etc.

There is not the least exaggeration in saying that history is the record of human violence, in other words, of man's inhumanity against his neighbour who is his own brother! We shall now illustrate this point with the help of examples.

Shortly after the Second World War a German scholar published a monograph on mass murders in history committed between 325 (the year of Constantine's conversion to Christianity) and 1912; the statistics are as follows: 24,321,000 men have been slaughtered by non-Christians (who have never been conspicuous as preachers of love), and 17,390,000 men by Christians (who have been the most vocal preachers of love)<sup>5</sup>. Now we must add to the latter figure the cost of life in the two World Wars. During World War I the allies' loss of life was more than 5,000,000, and that of the central European powers<sup>6</sup>, was nearly 3,400,000<sup>7</sup>. As for World War II, the cost in life is put between 35,000,000 and 60,000,000<sup>8</sup>!

The West boasts of its Christian heritage, and Christianity is the religion that teaches universal love and, at least theoretically, eschews all violence, but unfortunately the preaching of love has often been counterbalanced by the most sadistic expressions of cruelty. That which causes the greatest shock to Asian observers and historians is the bloody record of violence left by Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant groups in the West<sup>9</sup>.

The harassment of the Jews commenced soon after Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, and their wholesale slaughter, soon after the launching of the first crusade in 1095 by Pope Urban II (1088-99)<sup>10</sup>. The crusaders used to herd the Jews into the synagogues, and then set fire to the buildings. The soldiers had a very cogent argument in support of their action<sup>11</sup>:

God's enemies are with us; why, then, should we go to the foreign lands to fight against the infidels?

Jewish scholars have pointed out that the crusades marked a turning point in the history of Jewish-Christian relations: as far as the Jews were concerned, the crusades meant that there was a radical opposition between Judaism and Christianity<sup>12</sup>.

The atrocities committed by the Inquisitors are too well known to need special mention. We would like to recall here that the Inquisition was transplanted to India, with its headquarters in Goa<sup>13</sup>, and the Goa Inquisition was far more inhuman than its counterpart in Europe. The Archbishop of Evora, in a sermon preached in the cathedral of Lisbon in 1897, remarked<sup>14</sup>:

The Inquisition was an infamous tribunal in all places. But the infamy never reached greater depths, nor was more vile,

more black, and more completely determined by mundane interests than at the tribunal of Goa, by irony called the Holy Office. Here the Inquisitors went to the length of imprisoning in its jails women who resisted their advances, and after having satisfied their bestial instincts ordering that they be burned as heretics.

The victims of the Goa Inquisition were for the most part the Portuguese who were settled in India, and only seldom were the local Christians molested by the Inquisitors.

To revert to the subject of crusades, in 1208 Abbot Arnold of Citeaux preached a crusade against the Albigenses, a heretical sect in France<sup>15</sup>, and when, after Beziers, their stronghold, was surrounded, the order was issued to exterminate the heretics, some soldiers had a practical difficulty: how were they to distinguish the heretics from the Catholics? The venerable Abbot simply said: "Strike, for the Lord knows his own!"<sup>16</sup> The soldiers obeyed, and nearly 20,000 people were massacred<sup>17</sup>.

The following incident from Byzantine history will serve to high-light the sadism of Christians in the Orient. When the Byzantine emperor Basil II (958-1025), surnamed *Bulgaroctonus*, "slayer of the Bulgarians", defeated the army of the Bulgarians at Belasitsa (1014), he had the whole Bulgarian army, consisting of 15,000 soldiers, blinded and sent back to their tsar Samuel (980-1014). The tsar was so shocked that he fainted and soon died. Basil also gave orders for the extermination of men, women and children in the villages of Bulgaria, and the job was so thoroughly done that the Bulgarians, as the Byzantine chroniclers gleefully note, disappeared for two centuries from the scene of history<sup>18</sup>.

Protestants often condemn the Inquisition, but they have themselves been equally guilty of atrocities. Witch-hunting was a favourite act of piety of Lutherans in Germany, and the account of the execution of three witches, Catherine and her two daughters Susanna and Ilse, is tragically comic<sup>19</sup>. The three unfortunates were led to the place of execution to the accompaniment of prayers, hymns and exhortations<sup>20</sup>. Susanna was led around until the group had finished singing the hymn, "God, our Father, dwell within us", and when she was beheaded, they sang, "To thee we pray, O Holy Spirit". Ilse suffered the same fate, and

the congregation repeated the same hymns. After she was placed on the faggots, Catherine had her neck fastened to the stake with an iron chain so tightly that the colour of her face changed, and as the pyre was lit, the pious crowd intoned hymns, and continued the divine praises till her body was fully consumed by fire.

In England witches were either burned or hanged, but a few were condemned to the pot, i. e., to be boiled alive<sup>21</sup>! An appalling example for British cruelty we have in the sentence passed on the five judges who had condemned Charles I to death<sup>22</sup>:

You shall go from hence to the place whence you came, and from that place you shall be drawn upon a hurdle to the place of execution, and there shall hang by the neck until you are half dead, and shall be cut down alive, and your privy members cut off before your face and thrown into the fire, your belly ripped up and your bowels burnt, your head to be severed from your body, and your body shall be divided into four quarters, and disposed of as His Majesty shall think fit.

And the sentence was executed in full view of eager crowds.

A queer detail we would like to mention here is that Calvinist theologians formulated the principle that it was lawful to hate their enemies, for these were the enemies of God himself, i. e., persons whom God has from all eternity predestined to hell<sup>23</sup>. How this principle was concretely translated into action may be seen from the history of the USA, where the Pilgrim Fathers<sup>24</sup> had settled down after their exit from England for the sake of their conscience. There were in the USA some seventy-five or so Indian tribes, but now there are about fifteen, confined to the so-called Indian reservations: the rest have been exterminated by the descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers<sup>25</sup>.

We have so far been dealing with violence in the West, and honesty demands that we confess that India, the land of *ahimsā*<sup>26</sup>, is in all truth the land of *himsā*! For the Indian masses, their lethargy notwithstanding, exhibit the highest potential for violence. A few years ago a prestigious newspaper of our country wrote in its editorial<sup>27</sup>:

A popular myth, believed in profoundly by most Indians, has it that the people of this country are the mildest and the least violent in the world. An Indian, the myth further states, is an exceptionally tolerant person... Yet in 1947 the subcon-

tinent suffered the most bloody communal riots in recent world history; and communal disturbances on a smaller scale have not been uncommon since.

The people of this country have always displayed a certain subservience to those who are visibly more authoritative and powerful than themselves... The peaceful nature of the Indian people is constantly mentioned in the speeches of politicians, who seek to canonise their auditors at no cost to themselves. ... If this is a country of long speeches, it is also one of short tempers...

This is by no means a new development. It is simply not true to say that India has always been a peaceful nation. Its history is speckled with the blood of many battle-fields, from Kurukshetra to Kashmir...

It is a common habit in India to pretend to be what you are not. The difficulty about this is that sooner or later someone is bound to discover what you really are. Numerous foreign observers have written with surprise of the latent potential, among Indians of all classes, for often irrational violence: with surprise, because this was the reverse of what Indians had led them to believe was true...

Reference may also be made here to sati<sup>28</sup>, the treatment of widows<sup>29</sup>, bride-burning<sup>30</sup>, the massacre of innocent Sikhs in Delhi in 1984<sup>31</sup>, Bhagalpur, Meham, the numerous deaths in police custody<sup>32</sup>, and so on.

We shall bring this section to a close with a short account of the wars connected with the Taiping Rebellion in China (1853-64)<sup>33</sup>, a revolutionary movement that had managed to establish a communist-peasant state<sup>34</sup>, and had succeeded in controlling one-half of main land China. The leader of the revolt was Hung Hsiuchuan (1814-64), who was influenced by Christian ideas and who, in consequence of visionary experiences, became convinced that he was the son of God and younger brother of Jesus Christ! He felt that it was his mission to reform China, and impoverished peasants flocked to him; he revolted, captured Nanking (1853) and inaugurated a new dynasty which he called *Taiping Tienkuo*, "Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace".

The Taipings advocated common holding of property, and equality of sexes; they forbade slavery, prostitution, gambling, the use of opium, feet-binding<sup>35</sup>, etc., and they had plans to indus-

trialize China and even to introduce the democratic system of government. People accepted them as saviours and leaders, and soon they had an army of more than 1,000,000 (including both men and women), but gradually, because of their fierce opposition to Confucianism, the common folk became alienated from them. Besides, among the leaders, there were rivalries and factions, and also struggle for power, which greatly weakened the movement and contributed to its failure.

The revolt was crushed by the authorities with the help of western powers; thousands of Taipings preferred death to surrender, and Hung committed suicide (1864). The rebels and the government indulged in wanton killings, and the eleven-year warfare meant an enormous loss of life, which, according to estimates, ranged between twenty and thirty million<sup>36</sup>.

## II. Definition of Violence

What is violence? How shall we define it<sup>37</sup>? Let it be noted at the outset that violence is a highly complex, thoroughly human phenomenon, which can be considered from different points of view. There are, for instance, extreme cases of aggressive action, such as rape, kidnapping, robbery, murder, mutilation etc., which are all overt acts of violence and are recognized as such<sup>38</sup>. There is economic violence, usually known as exploitation, which, in the age of the Industrial Revolution, used to be justified by Christians in Europe with an appeal to God's holy will<sup>39</sup>. Another form of violence is the psychological one, which used to be regularly practised in Soviet Russia until recently: the dissidents are sent to the mental asylum<sup>40</sup>. Stalin made use of psychological violence during the notorious trials and purges of the thirties<sup>41</sup>. Psychological violence is a most potent means to train up soldiers: by inculcating in them the esprit de corps and the military code of honour<sup>42</sup>, and especially by depreciating the enemy<sup>43</sup>, the recruit is systematically transformed into a professional killer<sup>44</sup>. Once this is done, "body count", "search and destroy operation"<sup>45</sup> etc. become a simple matter of course.

A further form of violence is the one unleashed by an institution<sup>46</sup>, a structure, a system: here belong the multi-nationals, the capitalists, the communists, the trade unions<sup>47</sup> and others.

There is finally violence caused by individuals who belong to three categories and have their own specific point of view:

the incumbent who feels that he is called to preserve law and order, and resorts to violence in the name of law and order<sup>48</sup>; the dissident who disagrees with some or most of the policies of the system or structure and violently opposes them<sup>49</sup>; the insurgent who feels that the whole system or structure or establishment or institution is rotten and has to be violently overthrown<sup>50</sup>.

The spiral of violence is a phenomenon which must be mentioned here in passing<sup>51</sup>. There are structures that most unscrupulously practise covert violence, which in its turn leads to revolt, i.e., overt violence. This overt violence is met with repression, which is nothing but overt violence resorted to in the name of law and order, and it is resisted by the insurgents. The result is a spiralling of violence, which the two sides justify as a means to a noble and exalted end: for the incumbents violence is a means to safeguard the kingdom of God<sup>52</sup>, but for the dissident and the insurgent it is something eschatological, being part of the necessary birthpangs of the kingdom of heaven<sup>53</sup>. The two groups, in simple words, intensify violence.

Solzhenitsyn cites one of the earliest proclamations of Russian revolutionaries<sup>54</sup>:

What is it that we want? The good, the happiness of Russia. Achieving a new life, a better life, without casualties is impossible, because we cannot afford delay — we need speedy, immediate reform.

He adds the comment<sup>55</sup>:

What a false path! They, the zealots, could not afford to wait, and so they sanctioned human sacrifice (of others, not themselves) to bring universal happiness nearer. What did this bring to Russia? It brought her nothing but confusion, grief, and inordinate human losses.

These remarks are most appropriate and call for serious reflection.

In the light of the discussions so far we can define violence as the violation of a person's rights, i.e., right to bodily integrity, right to dignity, and right to autonomy<sup>56</sup>. Right to bodily integrity involves economic security<sup>57</sup>, and also freedom from anything that will hurt the body in some sense or other<sup>58</sup>. By right to dignity is meant the recognition of the claim to be respected<sup>59</sup>, precisely because man as man is a value which must be treated as such<sup>60</sup>. Right to autonomy implies two elements, on the one hand absence of necessity, and on the other, the pos-

sibility of choice. We shall try to clarify the nature of freedom which is basic to the human person's autonomy<sup>61</sup>.

The stone has to be a stone for ever, but man, by the effective negation of his facticity<sup>62</sup>, can become something other than what he actually is, and he is thus not bound by necessity; autonomy is therefore the execution of *zu sein*<sup>63</sup>, "the-having-to-be", which is man's *qua* man, and economic security is one of the conditions that make possible this exercise of autonomy. Power of choice means that X can accept or reject Y's offer, invitation, command, desire, wish, entreaty, and the like. Man's autonomy of being discloses itself also by independence vis-à-vis the processes and forces of the world<sup>64</sup>, and more especially in actions whose source is man himself.

Modern thought has stressed the fact that the other is freedom, which means five things:

- 1) the other is free, because God has made him free<sup>65</sup>;
- 2) he exercises his freedom;
- 3) he finds fulfilment in the exercise of his freedom;
- 4) his exercise of freedom can affect me positively;
- 5) his exercise of freedom can affect me negatively.

This has also a reverse side: 1) I am free...Violence arises when X's exercise of freedom affects Y negatively, or vice versa.

Whatever be the actual form in which violence is expressed, it is always seen as a violation of law and order, i. e., the proprietary sequencing of acts to be performed or avoided by individuals for the sake of the common good<sup>66</sup>. There is a subjective element here, the perception on the part of the one who is (or regards himself as) the custodian of law and order that certain acts are or are not in keeping with proprietary sequencing, but this perception of his will not be shared by the other, i. e., the dissident and the insurgent, and hence the rise of conflicts that leads to violence.

### III. Modalities of Violence

Those who have analysed the phenomenon of violence speak of the modes or modalities of violence, which may also be called violatives<sup>67</sup>. In English when the suffix-*-ive*<sup>68</sup> is added to a verb<sup>69</sup>, the word thereby formed conveys the nuance of "having a tendency to", or, "having the nature/charactear/quality of", namely, of the specific meaning of the verb to which the

suffix is added. Violatives are therefore modes or modalities or patterns of behaviour, which have the quality of violating law and order as defined above.

In concrete, the violative mode includes acts which coerce, force, abuse, humiliat ,insult the other who is freedom incarnate. Violatives can therefore be called acts which are thrusts<sup>70</sup> into the world of persons who violate themselves, violate others, or are violated by others. In terms of modalities, we can say that some violatives are perceived by those concerned as having been *thrust out* of the proprietary sequencing; some are perceived as *thrust into* it; some are *thrust beyond* it; some are perceived as *thrust backward* to it, and , still others as *thrust under* it<sup>71</sup>. In technical languages these five modalities of violence can be called distrusive, intrusive, obtrusive, retrusive, and subtrusive violatives. We shall now try to explain these forms<sup>72</sup>.

Distrusive<sup>73</sup> violatives are the ones which involve the absence of something expected, hoped for, and warranted within somebody's proprietary sequencing of acts and events. To take a concrete example from our own environment, the labourer who has been working the whole day gets as wages one-half of or even less than what is his due.

Intrusive violatives come into operation when one's demand that one's rights be respected is opposed by the other who feels that the demand is unwarranted and unjustified, and as such tends to *dis-ordering*. Workers' agitation for better working conditions and wages is seen by the manager as an intrusion into his rights.

Obtrusive violatives are the ones generated by some person's or group's forward 'thrust in the name of progress, efficiency, profit, gaining of time, reduction of expenses etc., which is felt to be injurious and harmful by other persons or groups; obtrusive violatives imply, from the point of view of some, a doing of violence to proprietary sequencing as visualized by them. A concrete example will be the replacement of handlooms by machines, which will contribute to efficient production but will also throw so many out of job and deprive them of their daily bread; or again mechanized fishing will deprive traditional fishermen of their livelihood, and the use of the tractor will render so many jobless.

Retrusive<sup>74</sup> violatives mean acts and events which thrust backward what some regard as the proprietary sequencing of re-

levant order and ordering acts and events, and which are therefore unwelcome. A concrete instance of this type is described by the dictum, "One step forward and two steps backward"; what has been gained is subsequently lost because of the *dis*-ordering of the proprietary sequencing of acts and events.

Subtrusive<sup>75</sup> violatives are those acts and events which are thrust under or below the proprietary sequencing and which generally tend to negate the very sequencing that one holds to be true, genuine, authentic; these are acts and events which are deeply hidden, and are capable of giving rise to upheavals in character and personality. Some concrete examples of the subtrusive type of violatives are autism, or the acute form of withdrawal into one's world of fantasy, self-lying<sup>76</sup>, false-hearted love, routinized work within a hated occupation, life with no possibility of enrichment etc.

The five modalities of violence here enumerated have a number of distinctive characteristics, which can all be reduced to seven<sup>76</sup>. 1) They are all acts done by man or events/happenings that take place through the interplay of covert and overt causes. 2) They all involve deviation from the proprietary sequencing of relevant order, and ordering acts and events. 3) They are violatives from the point of view of one party, while they are not from the point of view of the other. 4) From no. 3 issues forth the fact that each violative or modality of violence has its own contrary or contradictory point of view. 5) They are perceived as unwarranted, unwanted, unexpected etc. 6) They are all susceptible of phenomenological analysis. 7) They can all be metaphorically presented (and hence the metaphors of violence) and even represented on the stage (hence the theatre of cruelty)<sup>77</sup>.

All the violatives are conditioned by the factors of time and space, and this gives rise to the field of vision of violatives on the part of the persons concerned, thus making it possible to speak of the moment, the hour, the day, the horizon, the margin, the fringes, the periphery etc. of a person's perception of violence.

#### IV. Structures and perpetuation of Violence

Preoccupation with structure(s) is a distinctive feature of the culture of the present<sup>78</sup>, and experts have studied the phenomenon of structures from different points of view; in this section

we shall discuss it in its relationship to the institutionalization and perpetuation of violence. We define structure as anything that puts a limitation on our freedom, restricts our freedom, stands in the way of positive and effective exercise of our freedom.

We must never forget that structures are part of the fact of our being human, because for us *to be* is *to be with*, to exist is to co-exist, *Sein* is *Mitsein*<sup>80</sup>, the result of which is that the other stands there always as an obstacle to the exercise of our freedom. Finding that it was not good for man to be alone, God decided to make for him a helper (Gen 2:18)<sup>80</sup>. Helper means something that stands over against man as his counterpart, as one with whom man can enter into a responsible relationship of knowledge and love. And according to the teaching of the Bible the other is either the woman/wife or the brother, and both contribute to the limiting of personal freedom.

A factor that has accelerated the establishment of structures is cultural advancement. Somewhere around 10,000 B. C. there commenced the Neolithic Revolution<sup>81</sup> which was characterized by the following achievements in the realm of material culture. 1) Neolithic man began to produce food, unlike his ancestors who were food-gatherers and hunters, living on what nature could supply and what could be obtained by hunting. 2) Food-production demanded the creation of fixed and permanent settlements, and thus the first villages came into being<sup>82</sup>. 3) Animals came to be domesticated, a development whose significance can never be overestimated. 4) The use of metal came into vogue, and iron came to be smelted in Anatolia around 1200 B.C.<sup>83</sup>, and we are still in the Iron Age! And one of the by-products of cultural evolution was the emergence of more and more complex structures which restrict man's freedom, in other words, function as the matrix of violence.

Structures that thrive on exploitation depersonalize and dehumanize man, reducing him to the level of an automaton or robot, and those who are sharp enough to perceive this tragic predicament of theirs react to it violently. Their reaction takes concrete form as *ressentiment* and violence. *Ressentiment* is a French word corresponding to English resentment<sup>84</sup>, but as a technical term it has a special range of meanings, and its nature has been clarified by professional philosophers<sup>85</sup>. It has been defined as follows<sup>86</sup>:

...the bitterness that accumulates from one's own subordination and existential guilt at allowing oneself to be used by others, while one's own life rusts away unnoticed.

This complex sentiment includes three interlocking elements: 1) diffuse<sup>87</sup> feelings of hatred and hostility; 2) a sense of being powerless to express these feelings actively and effectively against the structures that evoke them; 3) a continual re-experience of this impotent hostility. All of us without exception have had this experience of ressentiment [when we felt ourselves impotent to do anything to get rid of the structures restricting our freedom.

Violence for its own sake is the second reaction to oppressive structures. There is an interesting confession by an industrial worker of the West<sup>88</sup>:

He is hitting me, and I am hitting him, because we actually want to hit someone else.

This anonymous "someone" is the all-powerful gang of exploiters who keep in motion the oppressive structures. Dostoevsky in one of his novels remarks how the underground man who is held underground by the structures commits acts of violence against the structures just to affirm that he is a man<sup>89</sup>:

Out of sheer frustration, man will play you a dirty trick just to prove that men are still men and not keys of a piano... And even if you could prove that man is only a piano key, he would still do something out of [sheer perversity — he would create destruction and chaos just to prove his point. Dehumanization brought about by structures gives rise, then, to violence, yes, even to violence for its own sake<sup>90</sup>.

Several attempts have been made in recent times to eliminate structures, and the most radical form of these is anarchism which advocates the full abolition of government or governmental restraint as the *conditio sine qua non* of personal liberty<sup>91</sup>, and which has an atheistic and Christian form. The Russian revolutionaries Mikhail Alexandrovich Bakunin (1814-76), Alexander Ivanovich Herzen (182-70) and others<sup>92</sup> were proponents of atheistic anarchism, whereas Lev Nikolaievich Tolstoy (1828-1910) advocated a Christian form of it with emphasis on non-violence<sup>93</sup>. Both the varieties of anarchism, for reasons that need not be exposed here, proved to be a failure.

Communist movements have as their goal the abolition of

unjust structures and the establishment of truly just structures, but what actually happened was something most unexpected. The Czarist structures were most corrupt and inhuman, and they were overthrown by Lenin who, after he came to power, resorted to Red Terror, i.e. simply killing people in order to force them to subjection. One of the first acts of the revolutionary government in Petrograd was to abolish capital punishment, but Lenin was angry at it, and had it reintroduced<sup>94</sup>! The new system created by him was most ruthlessly operated by Stalin, under whom millions lost their lives and several millions of innocents were herded into the Gulag archipelago<sup>95</sup>.

Mao's revolution in China completely eliminated the Koumintang structures represented by Chiang Kaishek and his clique. To cite a concrete instance of the inhumanity of the Koumintang structures, at a time when a terrible famine was raging in the Province of Siuvan and thousands were daily dying, Chiang Kaishek and his generals in Peking were enjoying thirty-six dish banquets<sup>96</sup>! No wonder, then, that Mao could easily sweep away the Koumintang structures, but the sequel to the Maoist revolution was that some twenty-seven million Chinese lost their lives<sup>97</sup>.

The last attempt to do away with corrupt structures, we would like to mention here, is the Protestant Reformation. Sheer honesty demands that we confess that there were innumerable abuses in the Church<sup>98</sup>, and also that Luther was fully justified in raising his voice in protest. But what was the outcome of the Reformation? The Protestant leaders who put all emphasis on the charismatic element in the Christian faith, finally ended up with structures: all the major Protestant Churches have their structures and the minor and splinter groups are much more structured than the major confessions.

A glance at history teaches us that structures cannot be simply done away with, and revolutions, when they happen to be bloody, violent and destructive, serve only to replace one structure with another, even a worse one<sup>99</sup>. This peculiar feature may best be described as an integral part of the element of absurdity in human experience.

## V. The Roots of Violence

We now come to the question of the origin of violence, and, understandably enough, numerous have been given in the

course of centuries, which can all be subsumed under five headings, the biological/evolutionary, the psychological, the environmental, the Indian, and the Biblical. Each answer has several variations, which cannot all be listed here.

The biological theory states that violence arises from genetic heritage, from some defect in the genes, which is transmitted through heredity, and serves as the root cause of violence. According to the evolutionary hypothesis, violence is part of the process of natural selection which involves struggle for existence and survival of the fittest<sup>100</sup>; in other words, violence is part of the living organisms' endeavour to procure food and keep themselves alive<sup>101</sup>.

The psychological explanation would have us believe that violence has its source in repression, in some traumatic experience in childhood, in the endeavour to transcend death<sup>102</sup>, in the urge to become a hero<sup>103</sup> etc. Erich Fromm has analysed the character of Hitler and Stalin and has come to the conclusion that the latter represents a clinical case of non-sexual sadism<sup>104</sup>, and the former one of necrophilia<sup>105</sup>. To put the matter in non-technical language, both were abysmally abnormal individuals.

By environmental is meant that which has to do with the aggregate of surrounding things, conditions, factors and influences which exercise an impact on man's behaviour. The Behaviourists reject consciousness as the subject of research and reduce the psyche to various forms of behaviour, i.e., a set of body reactions to environmental stimuli, and depending on the stimuli, man's reactions turn out to be acts of violence in varying degrees. Here belongs too Marxism, which explains away everything in terms of one environmental factor, namely, economics: capitalistic exploitation is the root of violence<sup>106</sup>.

The Indian point of view regarding violence is best summarized in the following verse from the Bhagavadgītā<sup>107</sup>:

Who believes him a slayer,  
And who thinks him slain,  
Both these understand not:  
He slays not, is slain (2:19)

The same thought occurs in the Kātha Upaniṣad as well (2:19). The act of killing and the experience of being killed are both the result of *mīyā*, *avidyā*, and once these are eliminated, there will no more be violence. The Buddha's point of view is that the

ultimate source of all forms of violence is *trṣṇā* (in Pali *taṇhā*), "thirst"; this position has much in common with the psychological explanation.

Finally there is the Biblical explanation which is held by Jews and Christians, and which is shared by the Muslims too: man, by the very fact that he is a creature, is fallible<sup>108</sup>, and fallibility leads to sin; in other words, precisely because man is a creature, there is non-coincidence with himself in the orders of intention and execution, which is so graphically described by the Apostle Paul in the letter to the Romans: "I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing that I hate" (7:15); "I do not do the good I want but the evil that I do not want is what I do" (7:19); "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death"! (7:24). The Jew, the Christian and the Muslim will concede without ado that there is a large grain of truth in the views exposed above, but they do not adequately explain the problem created by the fact of violence on the face of this earth.

## VI. Redemption from Violence

Is there any possibility of a redemption from violence? In the theological tradition of the Church we can distinguish two answers to the problem here raised, a pessimistic one and an optimistic one<sup>109</sup>. There is the line of thought inaugurated by St. Augustine, developed by Calvin and Luther<sup>110</sup>, and defended in recent times by Ellul<sup>111</sup>, which insists on the fall of man, on the basic disorder in the human will, and the consequent proclivity in man to evil; this can be cured only by the grace of Christ, and man has also to submit himself to all sorts of restraints which will curb the tendencies ingrained in him.

The optimist tradition comes to expression in the idea of man's divinization through the Incarnation developed by the Fathers of the East<sup>112</sup>, in St. Irenaeus' theology of the recapitulation of all things in Christ<sup>113</sup>, and in St. Thomas' teaching concerning the *potentia obedientialis* in man<sup>114</sup>. All these theologians stress the fact that the fall has not radically vitiated human nature, and this optimistic view has been defended by Rousseau<sup>115</sup>, the Liberal Protestants<sup>116</sup>, and the humanists<sup>117</sup>.

Can we completely eliminate violence? The answer to this question is an emphatic no, because violence in the final analysis is sin with all its ugliness, and sin will continue to vitiate human

history till the end of time; it will be fully eliminated when God's kingdom is established at the moment of the eschatological consummation. The only thing man has to do now is to try to curb sin and once this is done, violence will automatically be lessened<sup>118</sup>.

How can violence be curbed? The pessimists who feel that man by his very nature is sinful and as such inclined to violence, insist on traditional values, and especially on restraints, obedience to authority, conformity to the accepted patterns of behaviour etc. They remain quite conservative, suspicious of innovation, and make appeal to sanctions<sup>119</sup>. An extreme form of the pessimistic attitude we have in Khomeini's Iran, and also in South America, where civil rights and freedom are curtailed, and excessive force is used by the incumbents against dissidents and insurgents, and as a result there is the spiralling of violence.

The optimists argue that human nature, which is potentially open to God's communication, will be able to have a share in the new life brought into the world by Christ; Christ's redemptive grace will help man reduce the inborn tendency he has towards violence, and also imitate the non-violent ways of Christ, the suffering Servant-of God. The optimistic position can lead to a minimization of the fact of sin in man, but since every option has about it something negative, we should not overstress the danger.

We have always to take into account what Paul Ricoeur has called the spirit of superabundance which is nothing but the power of God's grace to bring about changes non-violently<sup>120</sup>. This spirit goes beyond what is conventionally called justice, equity, fairness, charity and so on, and its essence lies in that extra-measure of faith in God's intervention which is typical, for example, of the piety of the sufferers in ancient Israel<sup>121</sup>, and of the martyrs both Jewish and Christian<sup>122</sup>. This is the faith that can move mountains and makes possible non-violent involvement and struggle against injustice.

From the historical point of view, is violence now on the increase or on the decline? We can confidently affirm that man is becoming less and less violent with the passage of time; the Church, for example, will never launch a crusade, she will not condemn heretics to the stake, nor will she ever revive the Inquisition. All over the secular world there is a growing sentiment against violence, and pacifist movements are daily gaining strength; this is a good sign.

As Christians, it is our duty to work for the mitigation of human destructiveness in order to foster just and caring communities among men. This is done by eliminating in oneself the tendency towards violence, and also by praying, "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace..."

K. Luke

### Foot Notes

- 1 Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror* (New York, 1969) p.34.
- 2 There is a very extensive bibliography on violence, which cannot be cited here. For all practical purposes, cf. J. C. Chesnais. *Histoire de la violence en Occident de 1800 à nos jours*. Collection "Pluriel". Paris, 1981. J. Ellul, *Violence: Reflections from a Christian Perspective*. London, 1969. R. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*. Johns Hopkins Paperbacks. 2nd ed., Baltimore, 1979. L. Kuper, *Genocide: Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century*. New Haven, 1981. Luke, "Violence in the History of the West", *Negations* no. 3 (July-September 1982) pp. 16-20.
- 3 Authors have pointed out the contrast between the dehumanization of the Nazi soldiers who were assigned the task of shooting the Jews and "the humanity of the victims, seeking to bring comfort to their fellows in the moment of their own annihilation" (Kuper, *op. cit.*, p. 133).
- 4 Cf. W. L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (London, 1980) *passim*. On the extermination of the Jews, cf. H. Greive, *Die Juden. Grundzuge ihrer Geschichte im mittelalterlichen und neuzeitlichen Europa* (Grundzuge 37. Darmstadt, 1982) pp. 177-88. P. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*. Chicago, 1961. G. Reitlinger, *The Final Solution*. London, 1961. Short account in Luke, "Anti-Semitism", *The Living Word* 90 (1984) pp. 219-49; 91(1985) pp. 151-72.
- 5 G. Ludwig, *Massmorden im Weltgeschen* (Berlin, 1951) pp. 14-41.
- 6 That is, Austria-Hungary and Germany.
- 7 These figures are given in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (ed. 1980) XI, p. 966
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 1013.
- 9 Westerners at times speak of Asiatic barbarity; they, while dealing with Stalin's Russia and Mao's China, stress the fact that both of them were typical Asiatic tyrants and butchers. Easterners on their part refer to Western barbarity, and how true this expression is will be clear from what follows.
- 10 Greive, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-115. Luke, "Anti-Semitism", pp. 224-26 (for bibliography on the crusades, cf. p. 242, n. 31). K. H. Renstorf-S. von Kortzfleisch, (eds.), *Kirche und Synagoge. Handbuch zur Geschichte von Christen und Juden* (2 vols., DTV ed., Munich, 1988) I, pp. 115-33.
- 11 Cf. *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (16 vols., 2nd impr., Jerusalem, 1973) V, cols. 1135-45.
- 12 "In the memory of the Jews, the crusades became the symbol of opposition between Christianity and Judaism" (*ibid.*, col. 1142).

13 A. K. Priolkar, *The Goa Inquisition: Being a Quatercentenary Commemoration Study of the Inquisition in Goa. With Accounts Given by Dr. Dillon and Dr. Buchnan*. Bombay, 1961.

14 Priolkar, *op. cit.*, p. 175

15 These were groups of Neo-Manicheans, called Albigenses from the city Albi in the Country of Toulouse in France; the movement, which inculcated a strict morality in opposition to the laxity and luxury prevailing in the Church, won a large following, and was quite hostile to hierarchy. The well-known histories of the Church (Fliche-Martin, Jedin) give details about the sect's history and doctrines.

16 This is a citation from Ez 9:5 ("pass through the city and smite"), a text occurring in the account of a vision of the prophet.

17 A. Borst, *Die Katharer* (Stuttgart, 1953) pp. 118-19.

18 G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State* (Paperback ed., Oxford, 1980) pp.298-315 (p. 310). G. Schlumberger, *Basile II* (Paris, 1900) pp. 338-39. The soldiers were sent back in groups of one hundred, ninety-nine blind men led by a one-eyed man (i.e., a man whose one eye was spared, so that he could serve as the leader of the ninety-nine).

19 K. Seligmann, *Magic, Supernatural and Religion* (London, 1971) p. 273

20 Curious to note, the Inquisitors sang a solemn High Mass before the ones condemned by them were burnt at the stake!

21 Seligmann, *op. cit.*, p. 274

22 G. T. Taylor, *Sex in History* (Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1971) p. 183. The execution was to be done in public, so that it could be seen by the curious; even in the last century, in Europe, crowds used to flock to the scene of execution, and tickets used to be issued on the occasion! Even now, in some of the Muslim countries, people are summoned to witness executions!

23 This has been pointed out by the Japanese Buddhist scholar Hajime Nakamura, *Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples: India-China-Tibet-Japan* (Honolulu, 1969) p. 172. Calvin, a man with a highly morbid and repressed sexuality (Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 282), was a ruthless and cold-blooded murderer (examples in "Violence in the History of the West", p. 17)

24 That is, groups of fanatical Puritans who set up a colony of God's chosen ones in Plymouth, Massachusetts (1620).

25 The American writer Kurt Vonnegut, *Breakfast of Champions* (NY, 1973) p.10, remarks that children are taught to memorize the date 1492, the year in which America was discovered, but, as he points out, this was the year in which "pirates eventually created a government which became a beacon of freedom to human beings everywhere else". We would like to cite here from recent history two conspicuous instances of American violence which involve genocide. The first is the dropping of the atom bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki; Truman made the comment: "With this bomb we have now added a new and revolutionary increase in destruction to supplement the growing power of our armed forces" (as cited in *Thought 56* [1981] p. 66). Kuper, *Genocide*, p. 46, notes: "...the term (genocide) must also be applied to the bombing of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the U. S. A." The second is the overthrow of Sihanouk's government in Kampuchea, masterminded by Nixon and Kissinger, which finally led to the inhumanities of the Pol Pot regime; on this, cf. W. Shawcross, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon and the Destruction of Cambodia*. Fontana Books, London, 1980.

26 This is a term popularized by the Jainas who were opposed to killing, unlike the Brahmans who freely used to slaughter animals; the Jaina sacred books brand them as killers who deserve hell. Cf. Luke, "Cow-Veneration and Vegetarianism in India", *The Living Word* 86 (1980) pp. 225-54 (pp. 227-31). The Buddhists too contributed to the spread of the ideal of ahimsa (Luke, *ibid.*; pp. 231-37), but how they have been practising it in recent times is a different question: the Buddhist majority in Sri Lanka had regularly been slaughtering the Tamil minority, and herein lies the root cause of Tamil insurgency. For details, cf. the collective work edited by the Committee for Rational Development, *Sri Lanka: the Ethnic Conflict. Myths, Realities and Perspectives*. Delhi, 1984 (the contributors are all Sri Lankans).

27 Cf. *Indian Express - Sunday Standard*, July 20, 1980 (Cochin ed.)

28 Luke, "Widow-Burning", *The Living Word* 95 (1989) pp. 195-214.

29 Luke, "The Widow in Hindu Tradition," *ibid.*, pp. 321-43.

30 A common occurrence in Delhi and the areas round about and also in the villages in the extensive Hindi belt: most dowry murders go unreported, and even when case is taken, it is not followed up.

31 The Congress leaders were in the forefront arousing the rabble to slaughter the Sikhs; Rajiv Gandhi's remark justifying the action will ever be remembered by the Sikh community.

32 Sporadic in Kerala but quite frequent in the other states. It has, for example, been calculated that "Once every ten days for five years an undertrial has died (in Tamil Nadu)..., a record that rivals the Bhagalpur blindings, far away in Bihar ...Battered spinal cords, crushed heads, mangled limbs and pulverised testicles litter the findings of reports on the deaths." Detailed survey in P. Chawla, "Tamil Nadu: Tortured to Death", *India Today* (Sept. 30, 1982) pp. 45-51 (p.46).

33 H. Hookham, *A Short History of China* (Mentor Books, NY, 1972) pp. 276-81.

34 Both the Koumintang government and Mao claimed that they were following the precedent set by the Taipings!

35 There was in China the custom of enclosing the feet of girls in tiny shoes so that they might always remain small, for small feet were regarded as beautiful; the result was that rich women (who were invariably fat) could hardly move about.

36 Hookham, *op. cit.*, p. 286. We have not touched upon Muslim violence, lest the study become too lengthy; however, we wish to mention here one instance of Muslim sadism. The Turks needed eunuchs to guard their harems, so that castrated slaves were in great demand. To have a regular supply of them, Negro boys aged between six and thirteen were brought in large numbers to Upper Egypt, where their genitals were removed by the Coptic Christians (the work of castrating being forbidden to Muslims); priests and monks too (whether willingly or under compulsion we do not know) were engaged in the business, which was for them a good source of income! The death rate among the castrated boys was quite high, and the Coptic monasteries and even the missionaries of the Propaganda Fide used to care for them during convalescence. Cf. O. Meinradus, "The Upper Egyptian Practice of the Making of Eunuchs in the XVIII and XIX Centuries", *Zeitschrift fur Ethnologie* 94 (1969) pp. 47-58. The custom died out with the disappearance of slavery.

37 S. J. Casey, "Defining Violence", *Thought* 56 (1981) pp. 6-16. Cf. too U. Schonpflug, *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* (Basel, 1971ff.) I, pp.

103-10 ("Aggression"). K. Rottgers, *ibid.*, III, cols. 562-70 ("Gewalt"). The two articles include bibliographical indications.

38 Casey, *op. cit.*, p.12.

39 Marx had heard pastors exhorting the poor to suffer their lot with patience and promising them heaven as reward for their resignation to God's will; it was this that prompted him to brand religion as the opium of the masses.

40 This practice ended only under Mikhail Gorbachev.

41 A detailed chronicle of the reign of terror unleashed by Stalin we have in A. Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*. 3 vols., London, 1974-78 (Gulag is the abbreviation of *Glavnoye Upravleniye lagerei*, "Chief Directorate of Concentration Camps").

42 The principles are, "Never surrender", "Never retreat", "Be brave and attack", "Disable the enemy" ("Kill him"), and so on. Cf. A. R. Gini, "Soldiers in Combat: Strategies for Survival", *Thought* 56 (1981) pp. 17-28.

43 He is shown to be not belonging to the human species; he is evil personified, non-man who is to be eliminated; there is the situation of men *in extremis*: either I or he; the choice is obvious.

44 The top brass in the military are seasoned killers, and the absolutely first question they ask before launching an operation is, "How many men we can afford to lose"?

45 Practised by the Americans in Vietnam (and condemned by the Russians) and the Russians in Afghanistan (and condemned by the Americans)

46 The government as well as the Church are institutions or establishments, and both have equally been practising violence to safeguard law and order!

47 The unions in Kerala are notorious for their militancy, irrationality and insincerity (they receive their share from the employees as well as the employers).

48 In actual fact, this often means the maintenance of the *status quo*, and those who benefit most from it are the incumbents themselves; vested interests are at work here under a sanctimonious camouflage.

49 Dissidence, which is an integral part of democracy, is not tolerated by totalitarianism, both of the rightist and leftist variety (which claims absolute infallibility)

50 This is the situation in Latin America, where violence has become a way of life, and liberation movements are in full swing.

51 Cf. Dom Helder Camara, *The Spiral of Violence*. New Jersey, 1971

52 The dictators in Latin America and the rightist groups claim to be defenders of the Christian tradition.

53 L. M. Ruinoff, "Utopianism and the Eschatology of Violence", *Thought* 56 (1981) pp. 29-43.

54 Solzhenitsyn, *Gulag* III, pp. 90-91.

55. Solzhenitsyn, *ibid*

56 Casey, "Defining Violence", p. 12

57 This is lost sight of in capitalism (which follows the principle that might is right) and communism (which negates the individual's economic options)

58 E.g. whipping, mutilation (both sanctioned by Islamic law), etc. and also torture (resorted to in democratic countries even).

59 It must be confessed that the clergy have most miserably failed in this regard.

60 There is all over the world an awareness of the human person's dignity, the reason for which is the impact of two secular movements, Marxism and existentialism.

lism; it is to be confessed that the major religions of the world have not in any way contributed to its emergence.

61 W. Luijpen, *Existential Phenomenology*. Duquesne Philosophical Series. Pittsburgh, 1953 (later reprints). Cf. too R. Pohlmann, *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* I, cols. 701-19 (autonomy). W. Warnach et alii, *ibid.* II, cols. 1064-98 (freedom).

62 This is a basic notion in the thought of Heidegger and Sartre; H. Fahrenbach, *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* II, col. 886.

63 Another specifically Heideggerian notion; cf. J. J. Puthenpurackal, *Heidegger: Through Authentic Totality to Total Authenticity. A Unitary Approach to his Thought in its Two Phases*. Louvain Philosophical Studies. Louvain, 1987.

64 Hereby are excluded the philosophy of process and monism, which are both incompatible with the existential idea of freedom.

65 This is the Judeo-Christian view regarding the origin of man's freedom (which will also be endorsed by the Muslims).

66 Thus S. M. Stanager, "Order, Violatives and Metaphors of Violence", *Thought* 56(1981) pp. 89-100 (p.92).

67 Stanager, "Violatives: Modes and Themes of Violence", in Stanager (ed.), *Reason and Violence: Philosophical Investigations* (New York, 1974) pp. 207-38. Id., "Order", *passim*.

68 From Latin - *ivus*; cf. M. Leumann, *lateinische Laut- und Formenlehre* (Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft. II. Abt., II. Teil, I. Band. Munich, 1963)p. 214 ("formal als Erwähnung vom PPP auffassbar, bei unveränderter Bedeutung").

69 Compare captive, creative, desiderative, appellative, sedative, palliative, and so on.

70 From Icelandic *thrysta* via Middle English *thrysten/thrusten*; the basic sense is 1) to push forcibly, drive with force, shove; 2) to intrude, push oneself on unlawfully into some position or condition (e. g. "to thrust oneself into a conversation between others"). In the discussions that follow thrust is visualized as something involving the use of force, something unwelcome.

71 Stanager, *op. cit.*, p. 93

72. Stanager, *op. cit.*, pp.93-95

73 A neologism created from Latin *dis*, "asunder, apart, in pieces" and *trudo*, "to thrust, push, shove; the present compound does not occur in Latin, but there is *in-trudo*, "to thrust into/against", and *ob-trudo*, "to thrust onto against".

74 Latin includes *re-trudo*, "to thrust back"; in the language of dentistry to re-trude means "to push the teeth back".

75 Another neologism; Latin does not have *sub-trudo*

76 Stanager, *op. cit.*, p. 96

77 The French writer Antonin Artaud (1896-1946) issued in 1932 the *Manifeste du théâtre de la croute*; the theme occurs in the well-known ancient tragedies, such as Oedipus the King (Giraud, *The Sacred and Violence*, pp. 68-88). Cf. I. Schweikle, *Metzler Literaturlexikon. Stichwörter zur Weltliteratur* (Stuttgart, 1984) p. 436

78 M. Titzmann, *Literaturlexikon*, pp. 422-23. Cf. too A. Jorn, *Eropaïscher Strukturalismus*. Darmstadt, 1988. It was the linguists who first investigated the nature of structure, for language is constituted by structural relationship. The insight was taken over and applied to society by anthropologists, and subsequently

philosophers developed the theoretical side; finally exegetes utilized the new insights for the interpretation of the Bible.

79 Discussions in the works of Luijpen (n. 61) and Puthenpurackal (n. 62).

80 On the text, cf. Luke, *Genesis 1-3 An Exposition* (Pontifical Institute Publications 34. Alwaye, 1980) pp.88-89.

81 There were four centres where the development took place almost simultaneously, the Anatolian Plateau, the Zagros Mountain ranges, Jericho in Palestine, and the slopes of the Hindu Kush Mountains. Discussions in J. Mellaart, *The Cambridge Ancient History. I/1. Prolegomena and Prehistory* (3rd ed., Cambridge, 1970) pp. 248-51, 295-96, *passim*.

82 Some of the oldest villages are Shanidar, Karim Shahr and Jarmo in North Iraq (Mellaart, *op. cit.*, pp. 254-59); in Palestine there is Jericho, where archaeologists have detected the pre-pottery and pottery levels; cf. R.de Vaux, *The Cambridge Ancient History I/1*, pp. 499-508, 511-13, *passim*.

83 D. R. Hughes - D.R. Brothwell, *The Cambridge Ancient History I/1*, pp.176-77

84 Compare French *ressentir* (Old French *resentir*), "to resent", i.e., to experience pain at a person's words or behaviour; compare, "elle ressent vivement cette injure" (she feels that insult keenly).

85 Especially by Max Scheler, *Das Ressentiment in Aufbau der Moralen*. Werke 3 Munich, 1953. R. K. Merton, *Social Theory and Structure* (3rd Ind. ed., Delhi, 1981) pp. 209-10. Ressentiment is to be distinguished from rebellion, for in the, former one condemns what one secretly craves for, and in the latter one condemns the craving itself; rebellion can result from accumulated ressentiment.

86 E. Friedenberg, *The Disposal of liberty and Other Industrial Wastes* (New York, 1975) p. XI

87 Friedenberg, *ibid*, uses the qualification "free-floating"; we use "diffuse" as the antonym of "concentrated": a deep cut or burn in one part of the body (concentrated) is more bearable than shallow cuts or burns all over the body (diffuse)

88 As cited by Rubinoff, "Utopianism and the Eschatology of Violence", p. 38.

89 F. Dostoevsky, *Notes from the Underground* (New York, 1960) p. 27.

90 Rubinoff, *op.cit.*, pp. 38-39, cites an incident that took place on February 12, 1966, in a synagogue in Detroit: a Jewish youngster killed the rabbi in the presence of the congregation, and then committed suicide; he left a note in which he claimed to be a prophet and perpetrator of violence.

91 U. Dierse, *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* I, cols. 267-94 (anarchy, anarchism).

92 H.von Rimscha, *Geschichte Russlands* (6th ed., Darmstadt, 1983) pp. 465-66. Towards the end of his life Herzen, the atheist who used to say that revolution was his religion, wrote in his diary: "We have been born as destroyers..., we have not created anything"; cf. W. Lettenbauer, *Russische Literaturgeschichte* (3rd ed., Wiesbaden, 1958) p. 143. Herzen died a frustrated man.

93 Lettenbauer, *op.cit.*, pp.190-205. Von Rimscha, *op.cit.*, pp. 493, 496, *passim*.

94 Von Rimscha, *op.cit.*, pp.564-607.

95 Von Rimscha, *op.cit.*, pp.608-42.

96 Hookham, *A Short History of China*, p. 313.

97 According to the communication issued from Beijing on September 13, 1984, one million people died during the Great Leap Forward (1958-61); the American

estimate is between twenty-seven and thirty million (*Indian Express*, September 14, 1984, Cochin ed.).

98 Whereas Catholics were in the habit of covering up the fact or explaining it away, Protestants were wont to exaggerate it, but now there is a balanced view of things. For an elaborate and even nauseating account of sex scandals in the medieval Church by an ex-priest, cf. G. Denzler, *Die verbotene Lust. 2000 Jahre christliches Sexmoral*. Munich, 1988.

99 Khomeini's Iran is the latest example of this.

100 Feuerbach wrote: "Lebenslust der Natur ist zugleich Mordlust" (*Schonpflug, Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* I, col. 103), i.e., "Nature's urge for life is at the same time urge for murder."

101 Until recently the food that was produced fell far short of the need, and now while the West has surplus food, the Third World is suffering deficit; lack of daily bread is one of the prime causes of turmoil in the developing countries.

102 This theory has been propounded by E. Becker in a number of publications: *The Structure of Evil*. New York, 1968; *The Birth and Death of Meaning*. Ibid., 1971; *The Lost Sense of Man*. Ibid., 1971; *Escape from Evil*. Ibid., 1971.

103 Youngsters engage in violence, imitating what they see in films or on television, or to have their photo published in the papers.

104 E. Fromm, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (Penguin Books. Harmondsworth, 1973) pp. 380-84.

105 Fromm, *op.cit.*, pp. 490-574.

106 Marxism advocates violence. Russel's remarks are quite pertinent here: "There is almost always a way, though sometimes a much slower way, of doing things without violence. The French Revolution and the Russian Revolution, in spite of rivers of blood, did not achieve nearly so much towards economic equality as has been achieved in Britain in recent years, without any violence whatever. The teaching of hatred, however socially harmful the class against which the hatred is directed, always injects poison into the social system. When the immediate purpose of the hatred has been achieved, the emotion survives as a habit and looks for new victims. All advocacy of social change should be positive and not negative" (R.E. Egner-L.E. Denon, *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell* (Touchstone Books, New York, 1961) p. 708

107 F. Edgerton, *The Bhagavad Gita* (Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1964) pp. 107-8.

108 P. Ricoeur, *Fallible Man*. Quadrangle Books. Chicago, 1964. Heidegger speaks of man's *Verfallenheit*, "fallenness" (discussions in Puthenpurackal, *Heidegger*, *passim*)

109 For what follows, cf. E.C. Bianchi "Homo lupus? Toward a Christian Theory of Personal and Social Violence", *Thought* 56 (1981) pp. 101-16 (dwells upon pacifism as well.)

110 Bianchi, *op.cit.*, ..110.

111 Cf. n.2 above.

112 Orthodox theologians have published several works on the subject. T. Bratsiotis, *Die Lehre der Orthodoxen Kirche über die Theosis der Menschen*. Brussel-les, 1961. V. Lossky, *A l'image et à la rassemblance de Dieu*. Paris 1967. M. Lot-

Borodine, *la deification de l'homme selon les peres grecs*. Paris, 1970. D. Staniloea, *Orthodoxe Dogmatik* (Gutersloh, 1985) pp. 291-378 ("Die Welt als Werk der Liebe Gottes, dazu bestimmt, vergottlicht zu werden"). P. N. Trembelas, *Dogmatique de l'Eglise Orthodoxe Catholique* (3 vols., Chevtogne, 1966-68) II, pp. 161-304.

113 The technical term used by him is *anakephalaiosis*, which is inspired by Eph 1:10. Collection of passages illustrative of the saint's theology, in W. A. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Fathers* (3 vols. Ind. ed., Bangalore, 1984) I, pp. 84-106 (pp. 91-92: recapitulation). Cf. too G. Wingren, *Man and the Incarnation*. Philadelphia, 1959.

114 D. Wanke, *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* VII, cols. 1165-66

115 A. Ravier, *l'éducation de l'homme nouveau. Essai historique et critique sur le livre de l'Emile de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*. 2 vols., Paris, 1941.

116 H. Grass, *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (7 vols., UTB ed., Tübingen, 1986) IV, cols. 351-55. G. Horning, *Historisches Wörterbuch*, VII, cols. 1529-36. Liberal Protestantism replaced the traditional Christian faith with social concern and the improvement of life.

117 C. Menze et alii, *Historisches Wörterbuch* III, cols. 1217-30; cf. too Ch. Grawe et alii, *ibid.* V, cols. 1059-1138.

118 Such is the position of the Bible; a sin it often condemns is *hamas*, 'violence'; cf. F. Brown et alii, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (repr., Oxford, 1961) p. 329.

119 This is the case, even after Vatican II, with the authorities in Rome who are most suspicious of, nay, hostile to anything that deviates from the beaten track.

120 Ricoeur, "The Logic of Jesus, the Logic of God", *Christianity and Crisis* 39 (Decem. 24, 1979) pp. 324-27.

121 Luke, "The Problem of Suffering: the Tradition of the Psalmists and the Sages", *Jeevadhara* 4 (1974) pp. 120-36.

122 The readers are no doubt acquainted with the history of the martyrs of the Church but not with that of Jewish martyrs; hence this slightly long note. In the Seleucid age many Jews preferred martyrdom to active resistance (which was resorted to by the Maccabees in order to defend life and faith); when they were being persecuted and brutally murdered by Christians, the Jews opted to die rather than resist. Short account in Luke, "Anti-Semitism", *The living Word* 90 (1983) pp. 219-47; 91 (1984) pp. 151-72. Exhaustive survey in K. H. Rengstorff - S. von Kortzfleisch (eds.), *Kirche und Synagoge. Handbuch zur Geschichte von Christen und Juden*. 2 vols. DTV ed., Munich, 1983. When they were being massacred by the Nazis during the Second World War, the Jews used to accept death with the utmost tranquility and even joy; here is an eye-witness account of a shooting of the Jews in the Ukraine: "They had to put down their clothes in fixed places ... Without screaming or weeping these people undressed, stood around in family groups, kissed each other, said farewells and waited for a sign from another SS man... During the fifteen minutes I stood near the pit I heard no complaint nor plea for me.cry..." (*The Jerusalem Post*. International ed., April 24-30, 1983, p.14). The only instance of armed resistance on the part of the Jews after the Bar Kokba revolt (A.D. 133-35) was the uprising against the Nazis in the Warsaw Ghetto. We may note that the Israelis have been resorting to violence, but even the orthodox in private express regret over it; they argue that it is for the Jewish state a matter of life and death, and violence is the only way to escape death!

# A Theological Understanding of Revolution

Theology of revolution is explained here in brief within the framework of the Church's socio-political mission. One might wonder at the compatibility of a socio-political mission with the religious mission of the Church. Hence the first section deals with the socio-political mission, and the second with revolution in the perspective of the socio-political mission.

## I

Everyone admits the fact that the Church is to continue the very same mission of Jesus. But did Jesus ever enter into socio-political field?

Jesus' answer to Pilate was clear and unequivocal: "My kingship is not of this world" (Jn 18:36). Since Jesus came to bring the salvation of God's eschatological reign to every human being, does his mission belong to the social, economic or political order (cf. GS 42)? Can we consider him simply as a political activist, a social worker, an advocate of class struggle or a revolutionary?

Secondly one must admit the autonomy and independence of the State or the political community. The political community is the expression of the sovereign self-determination of the people and nation, and it constitutes a normal realisation of the social order<sup>1</sup>. Hence how can we read into the mission of Jesus a socio-political activity?

The above mentioned objections are answered when one admits the indisputable fact that Jesus shared the life, hopes and anxieties of his people. His offer of salvation was intended to redeem the whole man whose life is conditioned by human history and its socio-political milieu. Hence Jesus proclaimed the advent of God's reign and salvation to the concrete man who is poor, oppressed and captive (Lk 4:18ff). The same Jesus is alive and at work in history, offering the answer to the legitimate yearnings for the integral liberation and salvation of the total man. This mis-

sion is entrusted to the Church and she ought to have a deep solidarity with human society and history. Her religious mission therefore affects all levels of social, economic and political life (GS 43)<sup>2</sup>.

Secondly the Church and the State, although autonomous and independent, have the task of devoting themselves to the common vocation of man. Man's life in this world is within the temporal order in history in order to attain the eternal destiny beyond the temporal order. This brings in the role of the Church's mission within the temporal order on all levels (GS 76).

At the same time the Church, while exercising her mission in the socio-political field, should not be prompted by any motives of political, economic or social nature in the form of privileges and rights for her, let alone hungering after a share in power. This mission ought to be but the simple corollary of the Church's confession of the Lordship of Christ in total submission to the Spirit who alone can enable the Church to fulfil it (I Cor 12:3). Socio-political mission becomes therefore an act of faith and proclamation of faith. Hence the Puebla Conference of the Latin American Bishops declares:

The fact is that the need for the Church's presence in the political arena flows from the very core of Christian faith. That is to say, it flows from the Lordship of Christ over the whole life<sup>3</sup>.

The Church's socio-political mission is therefore a commission that is inbuilt in the mission of the proclamation of faith. This mission revolves around a threefold axis: In the first place it is anthropological because the man who is to be won over to Christ's power, is not an abstract being but one subject to social, economic and political questions. Secondly it is theological since man cannot dissociate his origin from his eschatological destiny. The latter is bound up with his redemption under God's salvific reign and it touches the very concrete situation of injustice to be combated and justice to be restored. Finally there is the evangelical aspect of charity which is the core of the kingdom of God in the world<sup>4</sup>.

The Church's mission therefore entails the task of proclamation of God's salvific reign to all strata of humanity — social, economic and political — and transforming it from within and making it new. The exalted Lord by the power of his Spirit uses

the Church as an effective instrument of renewing the entire creation: "Behold, I am making the whole creation new" (Rev 21:5; II Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15).

## II

As we have mentioned earlier, theology of revolution is to be viewed within the framework of the Church's socio-political mission. To trace its history, one needs to survey the early part of the present century that witnessed the "social gospel" movement in the United States. As a corrective to the individualistic and "personal gospel", the "social gospel" saw Jesus as a social reformer and Christianity as a social movement with the purpose of transforming the world from what it is to what it ought to be. Hence the 1960's saw the full fledged emergence of the radical theology as the most powerful countercultural movements with the search for new life styles. It rejected the traditional modes of religious expression with widespread questioning on the Church and secular institutions. From beyond the grave Dietrich Bonhoeffer's call for a "secular interpretation" of the biblical language was answered with a deluge of efforts to meet a "world come of age"<sup>5</sup>.

It was Paul Lehmann who first brought out the concept of revolution in theology in his exposition of God's kingship as God's political activity. Richard Shaull took inspiration from Lehmann's writings and called for a theology of revolution in the context of his experience in Latin America. Later the German theologian Helmut Gollwitzer propounded it more systematically. In its final form "theology of revolution" is a combination of the social gospel movement of America with French Marxian thinking and German theology<sup>6</sup>.

After going through this brief historical sketch, our consideration is here limited to a broad understanding of revolution in the Church's socio-political mission. In this mission politics should never be allowed to remain content with accepting the status quo, regarding it as part of divine providence. Divine providence includes the element of not only accepting the reality but also facing it with the power of the word of God. At the same time one should strike a balance between the extremes, namely, conservatism and reckless revolution. Conservatism can be resignation disguised as wisdom, while revolution for its own sake or

for personal gains is a negation of true revolution. It is irresponsibility dressed up as justice. Both conservatism and revolution of this type amount to evasion of political choice. Both are to be avoided in the interest of a revolutionary change for the better.

When we look into the Bible in this context, we find two trends in the prophets and the apostles respectively. The prophets appear above all to be opposed to conservatism, constantly calling for revolution which will restore human freedom, equality and brotherhood. Whereas the apostles seemed to have exercised a certain amount of social constraints and concentrated their fight against human opposition to the Cross, "wrestling against principalities, against powers, against rulers of the darkness of this age" and "against the wickedness in the heavenly places", over which Christ has won the victory at his resurrection (Eph 6:12; Col 2:15). These two trends of the prophets and the apostles are to be understood as mutually complementary. These two dimensions of revolution disclose the total picture of the Church's mission because the Church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone" (Eph 2:20)<sup>7</sup>.

Now in the theology of revolution, the term "revolution" need not always mean armed confrontation and bloodshed. It means radical change. Jesus' message always drives man to radical change and the Gospel advocates radicalism (cf. Mk 9:43-45; Mt 18:8-9, etc.)

Revolution that calls for radical change is not a mere technical revolution; but precisely and emphatically it means a revolution in the political and social area with its economic consequences.

Theology here takes revolution as its focal point of reflection and revolution ought to become an important theme of today's theological ethics. Accordingly theology should expound the Christian message in the language of the revolutionary age.

To espouse the cause of revolution, the Church ought to undergo revolutionary changes. Hence theology of revolution, in the first place, calls for a change in the Church's ways of living and acting as demanded by the contemporary situation in the light of the Gospel. Secondly this theology seeks to elaborate the revolutionary character of the biblical message: God is a God of history, who leads his people from Exodus to Exodus, and Jesus Christ brings new reality out of the old, i.e., a critical and chal-

lenging presence over against whatever stays static and unmoved. Thirdly it sees eschatology under revolutionary character, pushing whatever irrelevant of our inheritance to the past and turning our thoughts to planning for the future<sup>8</sup>.

As for the use of force and violence, it is very difficult to determine the varying degrees of revolution existing in the thinking of the different representatives of this school<sup>9</sup>. For our purpose we limit ourselves to a simple glance at the dynamic force that is apparently present in the great commandment of love, "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Mk 12:31 = Mt 22:39; cf. Lev 19:18).

Is not self-defence advocated and legitimized at every cost when called for? Is not violence included in extreme cases of self-defence (e. g., murdering the adversary as the last step when every other means fails to save one's own life)? Can we not think of "force" or "violence" shorn of rancour and vengeance? If violence is thus legitimate for self-defence in extreme cases, is it not valid also for self-defence in confrontation with unjust structures and oppressive political forms? Don't we have a valid case here? If so, does it not demand the same for the defence of your brethren — your neighbour — whom you ought to love as yourself?

Could we say that, as a last resort, violence, devoid (purified) of selfishness, hatred, rancour and vengeance, appears to be a legitimate means of fulfilling the commandment of love? "This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (Jn 15:12-13). "By this we know love, because he laid down his life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (I Jn 3:16). Does not the dynamics of this fraternal love impel one, as a last recourse in extreme cases, to take up arms for his brethren to the point of laying down his own life?

If this thinking makes sense and logic, how is it to be related to Jesus' message of love in the Sermon on the Mount, culminating in his death on the cross? How do we understand it in the light of the reconciliation of opposing forces, that has been effected by Jesus through his blood on the cross (Eph 2:13-14)? Hence further clarifications are necessary with deeper study along this line in order to ward off unfounded fears, fallacies and misconceptions.

Finally we ask who should champion the cause of a genuine revolution. It must certainly be a person who is self-transcendent, liberated in Christ Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit, one whose life has been steeped in the mystery of the Cross and Resurrection of the Saviour, a believer whose existence is one of faith in the Son of God who in infinite love laid down life for his sake (Gal. 2:20).

To conclude, it is to be noted that theology of revolution appeared as a reaction to the "personalistic faith" of both traditional and existential theologies. It also reacted against the "secular theology" which appeared more rationalistic and adaptive to an affluent society. Finally it sharply disagreed with the "death of God theology" which seemed to suppress the conflict rather than solve it<sup>10</sup>. In this context theology of revolution is an attempt to interpret Christian faith in view of a just society on earth by eliminating and relieving sufferings from the existing structures as well as correcting the structures themselves. It seems to be gaining greater relevance now than ever in this part of the globe where people are driven to despair under the oppression of socio-economic and political structures.

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#### Foot Notes

- 1 Cf. John Paul II, "Address to the Diplomatic Corps to the Holy See on Jan. 12, 1979" in *l' Osservatore Romano* Jan. 13 (1979), p. 1
- 2 Cf. also John Paul II, "Homily at Uhuru Park at Nairobi" in *African Addresses*, Bologna, EMI (1981), p. 155
- 3 "The Final Document of Puebla" in *Puebla and Beyond* (eds. Eagleson & Scharper), NY, Orbis (1979), p. 195. The present Pope endorses this in the light of GS in his homily on May 6, 1980. Cf. *African Addresses* (1981), p.123
- 4 Cf. Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 31; see also the "Inaugural Address of the Third Gen. Assem. of Bpp: 21.9.1974" in *AAS* 66 (1974), p. 562
- 5 Cf. Bonhoeffer D, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, New York Macmillan, 1967, pp. 106-131; cf. also Amelung E, "Walther Rauschenbusch" in *Lessicon dei Teologi del Seclo XX*, Brescia, Queriniana(1978),pp. 62-64; Bolewski H, "Reinhold Niebühr" in *Op. cit.*, pp. 406-407
- 6 Cf. Feil E, & Weth R, *Diskussion zur Theologie der Revolution*, Munchen, Kaiser, 1969, p. 130; Rock M, "Theologie der Revolution? — Eine moderne Formel auf dem Prüfstand christlicher Sozialwissenschaft" in *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift* 81 (1972), p. 285
- 7 Cf. Dumas A, *Political Theology and the life of the Church*, London, SCM Press, 1978, pp. 24ff
- 8 Cf. Feil E & Weth R, *Op. cit.*, pp. 130ff; Feil E, "Theology of Revolution" in *Theology Digest* 19 (1971), p. 221
- 9 Rahner K, "The Problem entailed in a Theology of Revolution" in *Theol. Invest. XII*, London, Darton (1974), p.246
- 10 Cf. Feil E, 'Die Theologie der Revolution' in *Stimmen der Zeit* 186(70)pp.145

# Church's Teaching on Violence

Violence has many meanings and there are quite a few ethical problems regarding violence. Nowadays, the most discussed is that of *revolutionary violence* or the use of armed violence to bring about revolutionary change in society, or at least to overthrow a manifestly tyrannical regime. But when we examine this point, especially in Christian tradition, several others crop up, particularly the morality of war. Besides, there is need of maintaining an overall perspective regarding the basic Christian attitude to violence and the main ethical principles to evaluate the morality of different forms of violence. So the question of revolutionary violence here has been treated from such a wider perspective.

## Scriptural background

The God of the *Old Testament* permitted and sometimes enjoined His people to take up the sword. Christians will always have to face the fact that Yahweh, not only sanctioned wars, but actively assisted the Israelites in their military charges. It is hard to overlook the harshness with which the Chosen People treated their foes (cf. Deut 20:15-18). We also see the fury which the Levites unleashed against the people who worshipped the Golden Calf (Ex 32: 25-29). Even some of the New Testament writers do not hesitate to extol the zeal of Old Testament figures who wielded the sword (cf. Heb 11: 32-34).

Allegorised interpretations have been attempted to explain the cruel wars of the Old Testament, but they are not always credible. While this violent trend of the people of the Old Covenant has been clearly superceded in the New, Christian writers will often cite the precedents of the Old in discussing the Christian stand regarding violence.

The *New Testament* appears as a *message of peace*. From the angelic greeting at the birth of Jesus (Lk 2:14) to Jesus' submitting himself to the violence of his tormentors during the Pas-

sion, the pervasive spirit of the Gospels is that of non-violence and peace. Jesus' injunction about "turning the other cheek" (Mt 5: 38-39) proposes a new ideal for his followers.

However, there are a number, to say the least of, ambiguous texts. Jesus did not ask soldiers to abandon their career. He had high praise for the centurion at Capernaum (Mt 8: 5-13). The Precursor, John only asked the soldiers who wanted to know what they should do: "Rob no one by violence or by false accusation, and be content with your wages." (Lk 3:14)

The strong and frequent military metaphors, especially in Paul, could not but have an impact on later thinking.

The coercive role of temporal authorities was explicitly approved by Paul: "The authorities are there to serve God; they carry out God's revenge by punishing wrongdoers" (Rom 13:4). The State's role in maintaining an ordered society, which was not without coercive means, is clearly accepted in such texts as 1 Tim 2:1-2; 1 Pet 2:13-17.

### Pre-Constantinian Era

Before the conversion of Constantine, the predominant view of Church writers was pacifist. The declining of military service was often motivated by the implication of idolatry or emperor-worship. But there was a deeper reason for condemning warfare. Many writers find bloodshed even in regular war incompatible with the following of Christ. To quote a few:

Tertullian: "Even if soldiers came to John and got advice on how they should act, even if the centurion became a believer, the Lord, by taking away Peter's sword, disarmed every soldier thereafter. We are not allowed to wear any uniform that symbolizes a sinful act"!<sup>1</sup>

Cyprian: When individuals slay a man, it is a crime. When killing takes place on behalf of the state, it is called a virtue. Crimes go unpunished, not because the perpetration is said to be guiltless, but because their cruelty is so extreme"!<sup>2</sup>

Origen: "We no longer take up the sword against any nation, nor do we learn the art of war any more. Instead of following the tradition that makes us 'strangers to the covenants', we have become sons of peace through Jesus our Founder"<sup>3</sup>.

However, many writers take military service for granted. Some even support the wars of the pagan Roman empire to ensure

wider peace, although the Roman rule was often most oppressive.

### After Constantine

As Constantine gradually triumphed over the Church's persecutors, the attitude of Christians towards warfare began to change. From the fourth century, the pacifist position became a minority view. Many identified the interests of God's kingdom with those of the empire. Idolatry and emperor-worship were no more an issue.

Eusebius of Caesarea (d.340) saw the victory of Constantine at the Milvian Bridge in 312 in Old Testament terms. Christian soldiers were now to take their place on the battle lines. Only the clergy were to refrain from bloodshed and killing. The exclusion of the clergy from such activity shows that Eusebius, like others of the time, had some misgivings regarding warfare.

In 314, the Synod of Arles promulgated the canon: "Those who throw down their arms in time of peace are to be separated from the community (Can.3). Although the meaning of the text is not entirely clear, it seems that once there is no more persecution or danger of idolatry, the Christian is bound to support the empire, even serving in the army when necessary.

Canon 14 of Hippolytus, a late fourth century compilation of laws, upholds the principle that Christians should stay out of arms bearing, unless compelled to by someone in authority. The ideal of pacifism is balanced by realism.

St. Basil (d. 379) does not exclude warfare, but enjoins abstinence from sacred things on those who were engaged in violence.

It is above all St. Ambrose and St. Augustine who face the issue of living up to the Gospel ideal of non-violence while being responsible for managing the affairs of State.

St. Ambrose (d. 430) openly supports warfare against enemies, although he has an abhorrence for civil war. He was not confronted with the situation of the oppressed rebelling against the violence of the oppressors. According to Ambrose, a man fighting for personal gain deserves condemnation, while one who risks his life for the welfare of the country deserves praise. "It is much more commendable to protect one's country from destruction than to protect himself from danger".

St. Augustine (d. 430) has provided the elements for a "just war theory". The need for war arises because of Original Sin as a result of which the human race has become a "mass of sin"<sup>6</sup>.

Under the condition of *libido dominandi* (the law of domination), God has provided the civil order as a means of preventing wrongdoers and restraining evil. "Surely it is not in vain that we have such institution as the power of the king, the death penalty of the judge, the hooks of the executioner, the weapons of the soldier, the stringency of the overlord and even the strictures of a good father. All these have their own method, reason, motive and benefit. When they are feared evil men are in check and the good enjoy greater peace among the wicked".

This broad sweep of subjects shows that Augustine, unlike many even in our time who engage in selective indignation or approval, does not hesitate to tackle the problem of violence in an overall perspective. If he was engaged in the debate on violence today, he would not be one who would ignore the massive violence perpetrated by vested interests and concentrate on the evil of sporadic violence caused by those who react against it.

The ideal, according to Augustine, would be a peaceful and true justice (*vera justitia*) that would prevail in God's kingdom<sup>8</sup>. But we cannot ignore the value of the "peace of Babylon" in our pilgrim state<sup>9</sup>.

It is evident that everybody desires peace. Even those who opt for war aim at a "glorious peace through war"<sup>10</sup>. Hence his advice to the Roman general Boniface: "Peace should be your aim, war should be a matter of necessity so that God might free you from necessity and preserve your peace. So let it be because of necessity rather than your own desire that you kill the enemy fighting against you"<sup>11</sup>.

War is less than the ideal. It should be a last resort: "Preventing war through persuasion and seeking and attaining peace through peaceful means rather than through war are more glorious things than slaying men with the sword"<sup>12</sup>.

One should always regret the horrors of war: "Let everyone grieve when he thinks about the truly shocking and cruel evils involved in war, and let him acknowledge his miserable state. Anyone who endures these things or thinks about them without sorrow in his heart is all the more unfortunate in considering

himself happy because, in fact, he no longer possesses any human sensitivity"<sup>13</sup>.

So it is far from the mind of Augustine to glorify war in any way. Wrong doing on the other side and the consequent necessity that compels the wise man to take up arms are a result of sin. Louis J. Swift is led to conclude: "The ultimate truth of the matter is that in an imperfect world, the just man, no less than the scoundrel, is faced with imperfect choices and with harsh realities that flow from them. Though he would have it otherwise, he is often forced to choose among evils, and in doing so he can be called fortunate only in a relative sense."<sup>14</sup>

Augustine would justify serving as a judge in criminal courts along the same lines. The position entails acts of violence which a sensitive person would loathe and cry out for deliverance from the necessity<sup>15</sup>.

The "necessities" should not be a cover for wars provoked by lust for power and renown. Augustine has no hesitation in condemning Rome's wars of conquest which have not brought true peace.

He is not unduly perturbed that "people who will die anyway are killed in order that the victors might live in peace". That would be the feeling of a timid man. "What rightly deserves censure in war is the desire to do harm, cruel vengeance, a disposition that remains unappeased and implacable, a savage spirit of rebellion, a lust for domination and other such things"<sup>16</sup>.

Augustine hears two voices in the Scripture: the voice of correcting evils and the voice of mercy. Acts of necessary coercion should never be governed by the spirit of cruelty and vindictiveness. One must always be on guard against this.

Thus Augustine did not find necessary violence and an inner spirit of love mutually exclusive. Military duty (*militia*) need not imply malice of the heart (*malitia*)<sup>17</sup>. The example of Moses' violence against the Israelites who had worshipped the golden calf came to his mind<sup>18</sup>. He does not find any difficulty from the injunction of the Lord "to turn the other cheek". "This text does not forbid punishment which serves as a correction. In fact, that kind of punishment which serves as a correction is a form of mercy."<sup>19</sup>

The compatibility between Christian love and violence, to Augustine's mind, does not preclude, but calls for the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate use of force. The criteria are to be derived from human wisdom.

### Early middle ages<sup>20</sup>

Although warfare for the next hundred years was considered a permissible activity, one was still required to do penance if one killed another in war, no matter how 'just'. The ideal, then, for the Christian was still non-violence. Clerics and monks maintained the tradition of abstention from military service and abhorrence of all human bloodshed.

However, at the close of the millennium, Christendom was faced with the threat of Islam. The ensuing crusading spirit produced a new pattern of sanctity. "The Holy Lance, which for early Christians had been a symbol of the crucified love of Christ, was now carried point foremost into the holy city of Jerusalem and became a symbol of the new Jerusalem which was to be built by the sword. The warrior's life became a way of holiness, equal to that of monastic orders, the shedding of heathen blood became an act of piety, and death on the battlefield a sure passport to the eternal joys of heaven"<sup>21</sup>.

Thus the concept of "holy war", reminiscent of Israelite tradition developed. It had ~~g~~a "transcendent validation"; the adversary had no rights and the criterion of last resort did not apply<sup>22</sup>.

At the same time, there was a lot of brigandage and lawless violence in a crude age.

The Church tried to mitigate the horrors of violence. Two typical measures were: 1) *Peace of God* by which violence in certain places and by certain persons was forbidden; 2) *Truce of God* by which fighting during certain periods like Lent was banned.

At the same time, a *just war theory*, building on the foundation of Ambrose and Augustine was gradually evolved.

### Just war according to Thomas Aquinas

According to Aquinas, three conditions are required for a just war (*II Iiae, Q. 40, art. 1*): 1) it should be *commanded by public authority*. "Just as it is lawful for them to have recourse

to the sword in defending the commonweal against internal disturbances, when they punish evil-doers, so too, it is their business to have recourse to the sword of war in defending the commonweal against external enemies". 2) "*just cause* is required, namely, those who are attacked should deserve it on account of some fault". Hence, *even an offensive war* could be justified. 3) there should be *right intention*, that is the advancement of good, or avoidance of evil.

Aquinas goes on to say that it may be licit to lay *ambushes* in war. However, pacts ought not to be broken, because as Ambrose states, "there are certain rights of war and covenants, which ought to be observed even among enemies" (art. 3).

He condemns *sedition* as a special kind of sin as it is opposed to the amity and peace of a people, (while war is against external foes). Its gravity is great "as the common good it soils surpasses the private good which is assailed by strife". However, "those who defend the common good, and withstand the seditious party, are not themselves seditious, even as a man is not called quarrelsome because he defends himself" (Q. 42, art. 2).

At this stage, Aquinas makes an important statement: "A *tyrannical government is not just*, because it is directed, not to the common good, but to the private good of the ruler. Hence, there is *no sedition in disturbing a government of this kind*, unless indeed the tyrant's rule be disturbed so inordinately that the subjects suffer greater harm from the consequent disturbance than from his government. Indeed, *it is the tyrant that is guilty of sedition*, since he encourages discord and sedition among his subjects" (art. 42, ad. 3).

It is on this basis that later Church teaching will admit an exception in the last resort to the general prohibition regarding revolutionary violence. However, the moral theory of justifiable revolution has not been sufficiently worked out in Catholic tradition. For the contribution of Luther and Calvin in this matter see the work of Paul Ramsey<sup>23</sup>.

Regarding *killing of a criminal*, Aquinas declares: "If a man be dangerous and infectious to the community, on account of some sin, it is praiseworthy and advantageous that he be killed in order to safeguard the common good" (Q. 64, art. 2). But this

may not be done on private authority (art. 3). Besides, it is never lawful to kill an innocent man (art. 6).

St. Augustine had held that one could never kill another for private good, even to defend oneself. St. Thomas nuances the morality of killing in *self-defence* by utilizing the principle of double effect.

"It is not lawful for a man to intend killing a man in self-defence", (except for such as have public authority when they refer it to the common good). However, "it is lawful to repel force by force, provided one does not exceed the limits of a blameless defence". "The act of self-defence may have two effects, one is the saving of one's life, the other is the slaying of the aggressor. Therefore, this act, since one's intention is to save one's life, is not unlawful, seeing that it is natural to everything to keep itself in being, as far as possible" (Q. 64, art. 7). The death of the aggressor would be "accidental", as explained in Q. 43, art. 3).

Hence, the so-called "killing in self-defence" is not a true exception in St. Thomas to the law forbidding the direct killing of a person on private authority.

Regarding *mutilation*, it would be licit on private authority only when it is necessary for the good of the whole body. However, "just as by public authority a person is lawfully deprived of life altogether on account of certain more-heinous sins, so is he deprived of a member on account of certain lesser sins" (Q. 65, art. 1).

Today, more and more people consider capital punishment as an inadequate, if not completely illicit, means of maintaining the public order. Maiming by order of public authority would be considered altogether barbaric.

#### Later developments in just war theory

The thought of Augustine and Thomas was expanded into a fully developed *theory of just war* by Francisco da Vitoria (d. 1546) and Francisco Suárez (d. 1617). They distinguished between 1) repelling an armed attack upon a peaceful people, which was called a *defensive war*. They did not see any difficulty in moral justification of this as it appeared as "an involuntary act" forced upon the community"; 2) taking up arms because of injurious action or infringement of rights, or *defensive war*. They determined the conditions that would make this a just war: a) the war must

be declared by a legitimate authority; b) for a just reason; c) it must be a last resort; d) fought with a right intention, not out of pride or desire of renown or hatred of the enemy; e) in a proper manner, that is, without destruction of the enemy or undue savagery.

Hugo Grotius (d. 1645) transposed the moral thinking into law. He began the codification of the "laws of war" in which immunity of non-combatants was given much importance.

Because of changed circumstances, especially the danger of "total war", Pope Pius XII made a significant modification in the doctrine. He stated explicitly that offensive war was no more licit: "Wars of aggression as a legitimate solution of international disputes and as an instrument of national aspirations are immoral"<sup>24</sup>.

Similarly John XXIII declared: "Thus, in this age which boasts of its atomic power, it no longer makes sense to maintain that war is a fit instrument with which to respond to the violations of peace"<sup>25</sup>.

So, according to modern Popes, *offensive war* would no longer be licit under any circumstance. What may be started as a limited action may spread and escalate into a much wider and destructive war. As John XXIII said: "While it is difficult to believe that anyone would dare to assume responsibility for initiating the appalling slaughter and destruction that war would bring in its wake, there is no denying that the conflagration could be started by some chance and unforeseen circumstance"<sup>26</sup>. Hence the urgent need for controlling the arms race.

On the other hand, Pius XII held that *defensive warfare*, however regrettable, was justified under certain circumstances. Among the goods of humanity, "there are some of such importance for the human community that their defence against an unjust aggressor is without doubt fully justified"<sup>27</sup>. Failure to defend these goods would give "free field in international relations to brutal violence and lack of conscience"<sup>28</sup>. Hence in some circumstances when all hope of averting the conflict becomes vain, "a war of efficacious self-defense against unjust attackers, which is undertaken with the hope of success, cannot be considered illicit"<sup>29</sup>. At times it may even be an obligation<sup>30</sup>. The immunity of non combatants and the general principle of proportionality would have to be maintained.

Vatican II, in *Gaudium et Spes*, wants the savagery of war

to be curbed and everything to be done to avoid a total nuclear war. However in line with Pius XII, it declares: "As long as the danger of war remains and there is no competent and sufficiently powerful authority at the international level, governments cannot be denied the right to legitimate defense once every means of peaceful settlement has been exhausted"<sup>31</sup>.

Many have attacked the current Catholic moral teaching on war as irrelevant since it is well nigh impossible to distinguish between offensive and defensive war, and between combatants and non combatants in today's circumstances. However, John Courtney Murray has defended it as a solvent of false dilemmas: 1) a soft pacifism versus a cynical hard realism; 2) universal destruction through ABC warfare and surrender to an aggressive totalitarian system. While striving to abolish war, it does tend to limit its evils and humanize its conduct<sup>32</sup>.

#### Teaching on violence till *Populorum Progressio*

Modern Church documents generally exclude violence as a way of resolving any conflict. Revolutionary violence as a last resort was admitted only in *Populorum Progressio*, 1967.

In *Rerum Novarum*, 1891, Leo XII remarks: "True religion teaches the labourers... never to resort to violence in defending their own cause, nor to engage in riot or disorder"<sup>33</sup>.

John XXIII in *Pacem in Terris* completely rejects the revolutionary path. Referring to a speech of Pius XII, he declares: "Salvation and justice are not to be found in revolution, but in evolution, through concord. Violence has always achieved only destruction, not construction; the accumulation of hate and ruin, not the reconciliation of the contending parties. And it has reduced men and parties to the difficult task of rebuilding after sad experience, on the ruin of discord"<sup>34</sup>.

Vatican II, in *Gaudium et Spes*, first admits: "It is lawful for people to defend their rights and those of their fellowmen against every abuse of public authority, provided that in doing so they observe the limits of the natural law and the Gospel"<sup>35</sup>. We are thrown back on our wits to discover what are these "limits". As a commentator remarks: "The Council was loath to take up this nettle"<sup>36</sup>.

Still, the preference of the Council for peace is manifest. "We should work together without violence and deceit to build

up the world in genuine peace."<sup>37</sup> This "peace is not merely the absence of war". It implies respect for human values. Hence a mere negative stance against violence will not do. Those who wish to prevent violence must work for genuine peace.

The Council commands those who follow the path of peace. "We cannot fail to praise those who renounce the use of violence in the vindication of their rights and who resort to methods of defence which are otherwise available to weaker parties too, provided this can be done without injury to the rights and duties of others or of the community itself."<sup>38</sup> Non-violence should not mean failure in responsibility.

Terrorism is touched upon only tangentially. "The complexity of the modern world and the intricacy of international relations allow guerilla warfare to be caused by new methods of deceit and subversion. In many cases, the use of terrorism is regarded as a new way to wage war."<sup>39</sup> Often it happens that powerful nations instigate local violence or animate vigilant groups to destroy those who are striving for justice. This is given a colour of fighting for "democratic rights". So what looks like fighting for freedom may be violence on behalf of imperialist powers as it happened in Chile when the government of Allende was overthrown.

### Teaching of Pope Paul VI

Paul VI faces the problem of violence squarely. In *Populorum Progressio*, he denounces the abuses of the capitalist system or unbridled "liberalism" which paves the way for a particular type of tyranny which results in the "international imperialism of money"<sup>40</sup>.

The Pope wants people "to make haste as too many people are suffering"<sup>41</sup>. Whole peoples are sorely tempted to redress the insults to their human nature by violent means. At this stage he makes the famous statement regarding revolutionary violence.

"Everyone knows, however, that revolutionary uprisings — except when there is manifest, long-standing tyranny which would do great damage to fundamental personal rights and dangerous harm to the common good of the country — engender new injustices, introduce new inequities and bring new disasters. The evil situation which exists, and it surely is evil, may

not be dealt with in such a way that even a worse situation results.”<sup>42</sup>

Here the Pope emphatically condemns violence in principle, but admits possible exceptions in extreme cases in a parenthetical clause.

This was promptly used by some Latin Americans to justify violence in the oppressive situation of that continent. So; on the first anniversary of the encyclical, the Pope declared: “It has seemed to some, by denouncing in the name of God the very grave needs which so large a part of mankind is suffering. We were opening the way for the so called theology of revolution or of violence. Such an aberration was far from Our mind and Our language.”<sup>43</sup>

However, soon after, *La Civiltà Cattolica*, a generally authoritative source, clarified in an editorial on “The Temptation of Violence”: “Christianity is deeply revolutionary, in social as well as in private life: it calls for radical changes... A Christian, to be faithful to the evangelical message, must endeavour to transform society and exert himself to bring about a radical change of structures — a real revolution, but through non-violent means. If necessary, he may go beyond the bounds of ‘legality’, when the laws are unjust and meant to keep alive unjust structures and situations...”

“A revolutionary uprising is allowed only in the case described in *Populorum Progressio*. In such a case the uprising is not properly a ‘violent revolution’ but ‘an act of legitimate self-defence’. ‘It is argued that violence is the only effective solution in the present desperate situation, when the patience of the dis-inherited masses is running out, capitalism and imperialism are so strongly entrenched that only a violent and world-wide revolution can dislodge them’. The force of these arguments cannot be denied. A Christian, however, cannot take efficacy as the supreme criterion of his action. Besides, is it so sure that violence is truly effective? Violence destroys, love alone builds up.”<sup>44</sup>

On the eve of his departure for the Eucharistic Congress in Columbia, August 21, 1968, the Pope expressed anxiety about the matter. He said he well understood “the ferment of impatience and revolt”. However, he said that “the solution of these deplorable conditions... is neither reactionary revolution or recourse to violence”.

The Pope here grants that "in other times, the 'Church, the Popes themselves, in other quite different circumstances, had recourse to force of arms and temporal power, even for good reason and with excellent intentions. We do not wish now to judge". "However, it is no longer the time to use the sword and force, even though they might be intended for justice and progress...The time is ripe for Christian love among men; that it ought to change the face of the earth; that it ought to bring to the world justice, progress, brotherhood and peace."<sup>45</sup>

Speaking to *campesinos* (farm workers) in Colombia on August 13, 1968, the Pope said: "Allow Us to exhort you not to place your trust in violence and revolution. That is contrary to the Christian spirit, and can even delay, rather than advance, that social uplifting to which you lawfully aspire."<sup>46</sup>

On the same day, during the homily at the Eucharistic celebration on "Development Day, the Pope declared: "We must say and reaffirm that revolution is not in accord with the Gospel, that it is not Christian; and that sudden and violent changes of structures would be deceitful, would be ineffective of themselves, and certainly would not be in conformity with the dignity of the people. Their dignity demands that the needed changes be realized from within – in other words, through an appropriate coming to awareness, an adequate preparation, and that real participation by all which ignorance and sometimes inhuman living conditions keep from being assured at present."<sup>47</sup>

Addressing the workers, he said: "Your charity then should have a force of its own, the force of numbers, the force of social dynamism; not the subversive force of revolution and violence, but one that is constructive of a new human order."<sup>48</sup>

Addressing the managing class, the Pope asked them not to forget "that certain great crises in history could have taken other directions if needed reforms had averted in good time, with courageous sacrifices, the explosive revolts of desperation"<sup>49</sup>. The Pope was warning that the richer classes would have to bear the responsibility for any violent reaction if they did not mend their ways. If bold reforms of structures are not made in time, violence sooner or later will be inevitable.

At the ordination of priests and deacons on August 22, the Pope prayed: "O Lord, make us understand... we shall be able to

understand their (of the poor) anxieties and to transform them, not into anger and violence, but into strong and peaceful energy for constructive work.”<sup>50</sup>

Then at the inauguration of the Second General Assembly of the Latin American Bishops (CELAM) on August 24, in Social Guidelines, the Pope declared: “We must encourage every honest attempt to improve the lot of the poor. We cannot be linked with the systems and structures that cloak and foster serious, oppressive inequalities among citizens and social classes... The strength of our charity is not to be found in hatred and violence.”<sup>51</sup>

Hence it is clear that the Pope wanted a radical change in the deeply anti-human and anti-evangelical structures of society. But he did not want this to be brought about through violence. If he did not accept “revolution”, it is because he understood the term to mean an explosive reaction that would in fact be violent or would be an abrupt change that might only aggravate the situation.

Thus at the CELAM Assembly, he went on to say: “Of the various ways leading to a just reordering of society, we cannot choose that of atheistic Marxism or organized revolt, much less that of anarchy and bloodshed. We must distinguish between our obligation and purpose from those who exalt violence into a noble ideal, a glamorous heroism, an obliging theology. Let us not commit new wrongs to repair past errors and present ills.”<sup>52</sup>

Was there a real shift from the Pope’s position in *Populo-rum Progressio* where he admitted the possibility of violence in extreme cases? Perhaps he judged that the exception, though valid in theory, was not applicable to the situation in Latin America. He might have thought that the ruling classes there would be easily moved to change of heart by his exhortations, which in the event did not happen.

However, it is interesting to note that among the documents the Pope suggested to the CELAM meeting is “the detailed letter of the Jesuit provincials, meeting in Rio de Janeiro in May of this year”<sup>53</sup>. In that Letter, it is said: “Convinced that the whole of humanity, in the midst of fratricidal conflicts, deeply aspires towards peace, and faithful to the evangelical spirit expressed in the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* of John XXIII, we commit all our forces to promote bold transformations that will work profound

changes. Violent attitudes are not authentic when they are inspired by a utopia, frustration and hatred, and not out of conscientious reflection and Christian love.”<sup>54</sup>

The ensuing Assembly of CELAM produced the famous *Medellin Documents*. In that on *Peace*, the Bishops profess their commitment to non-violent action on behalf of justice. They point out that “Peace is the fruit of Love” which is the “soul of justice” (N. 14). They repeat the statement of the Pope that “violence is neither Christian nor evangelical” (N. 15).

However, they also state that “in many instances Latin America finds itself faced with a situation of injustice that can be called institutionalized violence”. “We should not be surprised, therefore, that the ‘temptation to violence’ is surfacing in Latin America.” (N. 16)

So the Bishops urged the privileged class “not to take advantage of the pacifist position of the Church in order to oppose, either actively or passively, the profound transformations that are so necessary”. If they do so, they would be “responsible to history for explosive revolutions of despair” (N. 17).

N. 31 of *Populorum Progressio* is now recast to make the exceptive call no more parenthetical: “If it is true that revolutionary insurrection can be legitimate in the case of evident and prolonged ‘tyranny that seriously works against the fundamental rights of man, and damages the common good of the country’, whether it proceeds from one person or clearly unjust structures, it is also certain that violence or ‘armed revolution’ generally ‘generates new injustices, introduces new imbalances and causes new disasters: one cannot combat a real evil at the price of a greater evil.’ ”

The Bishops then finally state: “If we consider, then, the totality of the circumstances of our countries, and if we take into account the Christian preference for peace, the enormous difficulty of a civil war, the logic of violence, the atrocities it engenders, the risk of provoking foreign intervention, illegitimate as it may be, the difficulty of building a regime of justice and freedom while participating in a process of violence, we earnestly desire that the dynamism of the awakened and organized community be put to the service of justice and peace.” (N.19)

Hence, revolutionary insurrection, as a last resort, is at best

a lesser evil; but often it may be a greater evil. So the Christian must resolutely choose peace and non-violent methods of struggle in order to bring about justice. But one who does not commit himself to such a struggle has no right to condemn the counter-violence of the oppressed people.

Pope Paul VI, in his Apostolic Letter, *Octagesima Adveniens*, 1971, among other things, condemns Marxist ideology for "its dialectic of violence"<sup>55</sup>.

The Synod of Bishops, the same year, speaks at length about the "network of domination, oppression and abuses, which stifle freedom"<sup>56</sup> about "the cry of those who suffer violence and are oppressed by unjust structures" and so on<sup>57</sup>. It calls for redressal of these evils and restoring of justice. But the Synod does not speak of the right to engage in counter-violence.

### Teaching of Pope John Paul II

In his opening address at the Puebla Conference in Mexico, January 28, 1979, the Pope strongly voiced his preferential love for the most needy and stood for their rights. But he warned against certain unacceptable "re-readings" of the Gospel. Among these is the "depiction of Jesus as a political activist, as a fighter against Roman oppression and the authorities, and even as someone involved in the class struggle"<sup>58</sup>.

In his Message for World Peace Day on January 1, 1979, while recognizing the structural causes of conflicts, the Pope exhorts: "Human affairs must be dealt with humanely, not by violence. Tensions, rivalries and conflicts must be settled by reasonable negotiations and not by force... Recourse to arms cannot be considered the right means of settling conflicts. Inalienable human rights must be safe-guarded in every circumstance. It is not permissible in order to impose a solution."<sup>59</sup>

The Pope disapproves of the theory of class struggle: "By expressing everything in terms of force, of group and class struggles, and of friends and enemies, a propitious atmosphere is created for social barriers, contempt, even hatred and terrorism, and underhand or open support for them. On the contrary, mankind should possess a vision of peace, speak the language of peace, and make gestures of peace."<sup>60</sup>

To the rebels in Northern Ireland, on September 29, 1979, the Pope said: "On my knees, I beg you to turn from the paths

of violence and to return to the ways of peace. You may claim to work for justice. I too believe in justice. But *violence only delays the day*."<sup>60</sup>

In his addresses in Brazil, the following year, the Pope insisted more on solidarity with the poor. He supported the Brazilian Bishops, especially Archbishop Helder Camara, in his championship of the cause of the poor.

He told the President and his officers: "Put your power, both political and economic or cultural, in the service of solidarity extended to all men, but first of all to those who need it most, whose rights are most often violated. Take sides with the poor, in accordance with the teachings of the Church."<sup>61</sup> He affirmed that it is first of all the heart of man that should be transformed. Any system must be for man and not man for the system.

In his address to CELAM on July 2, 1980, the Pope declared that the Church "denounces instigation to any form of violence, tension, repression, class struggles, wars with all their horrors"<sup>62</sup>.

In a speech to workers at Sao Paulo, the Pope denounced the dangers of rightist and leftist deviations in the exercise of power and the use of violence. "Violence destroys what it intends to create whether it seeks to maintain the privileges of the few or whether it attempts to impose the needed changes...The class struggle is not the way to a just social order, because it brings with it a risk of ruining the condition of the opposing parties by creating new situations of injustice. Nothing can be built on a lack of love, still less on the foundation of hatred that seeks the destruction of the hated."<sup>63</sup>

The Instruction *Libertatis Conscientia*, 1986, of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith on "Christian Freedom and Liberation" resumes past Church teaching on revolution and violence. It says that the situation of grave *injusticia* requires far-reaching reforms and suppressing unjustifiable privileges. However, "those who desert the path of reform and favour the 'myth of revolution', not only foster the illusion that the abolition of an evil situation is in itself sufficient to create a more human society; they also encourage the setting up of totalitarian regimes" (N.78).

Regarding *armed struggle*, the document acknowledges

that "the Church's Magisterium admits it as a last resort to put an end to an obvious and prolonged tyranny which is gravely damaging the fundamental rights of individuals and the common good". However, "the concrete application of this means cannot be contemplated until there has been a very rigorous analysis of the situation". Moreover, "because of the continual development of the technology of violence and the increasingly serious danger implied in its recourse, that which today is termed '*passive resistance*' shows a way more conformable to moral principles and has no less prospects of success" (N. 90).

The document goes on to say: "One can never approve, whether perpetrated by established power or insurgents, crimes such as reprisals against the general population, torture, or methods of terrorism and deliberate provocation aimed at causing deaths during popular demonstrations."

Regarding deaths during popular demonstrations, it is interesting to note that deliberate provocation aimed at causing deaths is condemned; not necessarily, organizing a demonstration during which some deaths may result. The morality of this would have to be judged from the principle of double effect and due proportionality.

The encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, on Social Concern, 1987, mentions *terrorism* among the grave social evils or "painful wounds" in today's world. This is the "intention to kill people and destroy property indiscriminately and to create a climate of terror and insecurity, often including the taking of hostages". This would not be justified even with the intention of creating a better society (N. 24). It would not be permissible to provoke massacres or abduct innocent people who have nothing to do with the conflicts so as to have propaganda purpose for fostering a cause.

However, the problem is to distinguish between such senseless terrorism and a genuine war of national liberation. Unfortunately, the judgement on such events largely depends on the bias of those who pronounce it.

### Conclusion

Church teaching has always upheld the Gospel ideal of peace and non-violence. However, from the beginning, it had to take into account the fact of military service and the need for maintaining internal security and protection from external enemies.

The sinful situation of mankind called for a certain realism in accepting some necessary violence. There was even a glorification of "holy wars" during the time of the Crusades. Until recently, even "offensive war" was justified if required to protect vital interests of social groups. Hence gradually a "just war theory" developed. St. Thomas did not hesitate to apply it to attacking a tyrannical regime, saying that it is not the rebels but the tyrant himself that was seditious.

In modern times, the Popes have tended to restrict the just war theory to defensive wars. The nuclear threat and the development of increasingly lethal weapons as well as the tendency of a conflict to spread have stimulated a more urgent search for peaceful means to resolve any conflict. Still, the Church has maintained the right of nations to defend themselves against unjust attacks.

Revolutionary violence has been frequently condemned by the Popes as generally against human values and as tending to cause greater evils than that against which it is directed. Still, official teaching has not absolutely excluded violent uprising as a last resort against longstanding and oppressive tyranny. In practice, however, the Popes have urged the utmost restraint in taking this path and strongly suggested the peaceful path of social change, even while condemning unjust structures and calling for radical reforms.

The Popes have condemned violence whether it comes from the desire to maintain vested interests in the name of national security or from the urge to counteract such violence in order to overthrow tyrannical regimes and structures. According to the mind of the Popes, if reforms are not made in time, the oppressors will have to bear the responsibility of any violence that may ensue. Those who would wish to avert violence from the masses should actively struggle to bring about peaceful change.

The Popes have given a prudential judgement against the path of violence in Latin America. Those who would make a contrary judgement would have to demonstrate that violence would indeed be a more efficacious path in the short and long run. They would have to weigh the consequences of unleashing violence, especially the suffering which the very victims of the present injustice would have to bear.

Although, Church teaching is not as simple as some would want or make it out to be, it has definitely contributed to the refining of the moral conscience of mankind.

George V. Lobo

Foot Notes

1. *On Idolatry*, 19, 1-3.
2. *To Donatus*, 6.
3. *Against Celsus*, 3 and 8
4. See Louis J. Swift, *The Early Fathers on War and Military Service*, Wilmington, Del., Michael Glazier, 1983, pp. 91-92
5. *On the Duties of the Clergy*, 3, 3, 33
6. *To Simplicianus*, 1, 2, 16
7. *Letters*, 153, 6, 16.
8. *City of God*, 19, 17.
9. *Ib.*, 19, 26.
10. *Ib.*, 19, 12
11. *Letters*, 189, 6
12. *Ib.*, 229, 2.
13. *City of God*, 19, 7.
14. *Ib.*, p.116.
15. *Ib.*, 19, 6.
16. *Against Faustus*, 22, 74.
17. Cf. *Letters*, 302, 15.
18. *Against Faustus*, 22, 79.
19. *On the Lord's Sermon*, 1,20,63
20. See Frederick H. Russell, *The Just War in the Middle Ages*, NY, Cambridge Publishing House, 1975
21. P. Regamey, *Non-Violence and the Christian Conscience*, London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1966, p. 16
22. John Howard Yoder, *When War is Unjust*, Minneapolis, Augsburg Publishing House, 1984, pp. 26-27
23. *War and Christian Conscience*, Durhan, Duke University Press, '61, pp. 117-126
24. Christmas Message of 1944, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 37(1945)18
25. *Encyclical Pacem in Terris*, 1963, N. 127
26. *Ibid.*, N. 117
27. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 41 (1949) 13.
28. *ib.*, 45(1953) 748
29. *Ib.*, 49(1957) 19.
30. *ib.*, 41 (1949) 13
31. N. 79
32. "Remarks on the Moral Problems of War", *Theological studies*, 20 (1959) 40-69; *Morality of Modern Warfare*, New York, Council on Religion and International Affairs, 1959.
33. N. 31.
34. N. 162
35. N. 64
36. Herbert Vorgrimler, ed., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, London, Burns and Oates, 1969, pp. 319-320
37. N. 78.
38. *ibid*
39. N. 79
40. 26
41. N. 29
42. N. 31
43. *The Pope Speaks*, 13(1968) 149.
44. May 18, 1968, pp. 313-317
45. *Ib.*, 13(1968) 232
46. *ib.*, 13(1968) 236
47. *ib.*, 13(1968) 240
48. *Ib.*, 13(1968) 242.
49. *ibid*.
50. *La Documentation Catholique*, 50(1968) 1543.
51. *The Pope Speaks*, 13(1968) 256
52. *ibid*
53. *Ib.*, 13(1968)254
54. *La Documentation Catholique*, 50(1968) 1322
55. N. 42.
56. N. 5
57. *Osservatore Romano*, English ed., Feb. 5, 1979, p.2,
58. Quoted in John Desrochers, *The Social Teaching of the Church*, Bangalore 1982, p. 291.
59. *Ibid*.
60. Quoted in John Desrochers, *op. cit.*, pp.298-299
61. "Appeal for Peace and Reconciliation" from Drogheda in the Republic of Ireland, *Osservatore Romano*, English ed., October 8, 1979, p. 10
62. *Ib.*, July 14, 1980, p. 87
63. *The Pope Speaks*, 25(1980)365

# Structural Violence, Human Rights and the Right to Protest

This year we commemorated the 45th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; and at the moment the threat of war looms large in the gulf which can have global repercussions. This year also witnessed peaceful transformation of many governments to a democratic system in Eastern Europe, mainly because of the peace loving nature of one or two leaders. Man is tremendously prone to violence, yet at heart every man seeks peace and harmony. In apartheid, caste system, racial superiority and the subjugation of one nation by the other by overt or covert means there is always violence at play. We are concerned here not with armed violence, which is quite obvious to every one, but with the subtle forms of violence that are at work at various levels, and the way it has percolated into the very texture of society. Even religions supposed to preach and practise peace, justice, love and harmony, only make loud proclamations, thus contributing towards the global injustice. Even if the greatest saint advocates violence in the name of religion it needs to be condemned. This article proposes to study structural violence in its various aspects, and also to make a short enquiry into human rights, and the violation of them amounting to injustice and violence. Finally, we shall try to show in such a context what sort of theology is needed and what prophetic stance the Church should take. Besides, we want to insist that the right to protest against injustice is a basic right of man.

## Structural Violence

Since we are concerned with structural violence we must make it clear what is meant by the same. The moment *Homo Sapiens* commenced his settled life there began to come about structures in some form or other. Structures are meant to serve the various ends of man. But when they become all powerful and oppress the human person, they lose all value. Then they become *violent* in nature and no more serve the purpose. Hence the need for a constant review of the existing structures.

We can think of various structures that are active in our society. First and foremost comes the economic structure. This structure involves the production, distribution and consumption of goods. According to Karl Marx this is the basic structure on which all other structures are built. As we know, man is an economic being and in today's world money has become all powerful. The affluent countries dictate terms to the developing and underdeveloped countries, thus harassing them economically. If we divide the countries into West, East and South in terms of development we can perceive that in all these nations the class violence and structural violence go hand in hand<sup>1</sup>. In the West state monopoly, capitalism and multi-national capitalism try to reduce the economic, social and cultural rights of the individuals by means of manipulation of the economic structure. This leads to a form of structural violence. If this is the situation in the West, in the East the built-up structure of the state bureaucracy and technocracy exercises structural violence over the masses by virtue of its control over the means and ends of production. The countries of the South block depend heavily on the first two, and national and international capitalism that prevails in these countries through the exercise of dominance-dependence relationship in every respect, has reduced the economic, social, cultural and political rights of the social majority which is fighting below the poverty line to survive, almost to zero. The power and control structure is made in such a way that the capitalism of the under-developed South has become a dependent sub-centre to the centre, the over-developed and developed capitalism, and is exercising all-round territorial, social, tribal, ethnic and cultural types of violence over the national peripheries. The victims are, naturally, the human beings who look for a more humane development and growth. If this is the global situation, on the national level a few big business houses of India determine the politics, the social and cultural life of the people. Joining hands with these business houses all the political, legal and religious structures oppress the downtrodden people. In the economic dimension of life there is the vicious circle of poverty. It consists of hunger, illness, and early mortality, and is provoked by exploitation and class domination. The economic systems of labour and production keep producing unequal and unjust advances at different times. Even if the *per capita* income increases, it is not to every one's advantage. For individual groups among a

people and for entire peoples the result is a vicious circle of poverty, work, illness and exploitation. Within the larger circle smaller vicious circles appear; poverty, drugs, crime, prison, and further poverty all being linked together. From a global perspective, the economic systems of the world work in a spiral which makes the rich nations richer and poor nations poorer. The prices of agrarian products decline and prices of industrial products rise. Thus the underdeveloped countries fall increasingly into debt and cannot obtain freedom<sup>2</sup>. A true freedom can be enjoyed only when a country is free from economic manipulation.

Taking the global political situation into account we find that it is manipulative politics that is at work. The super powers and developed nations determine what sort of government should be functioning in the developing countries. Sometimes the political violence is exercised in a stealthy way that the victims are made to consider the oppressors as benefactors. In the political dimension, the vicious circle of force is inextricably bound up with the vicious circle of poverty. It is produced in particular societies by the domination of dictatorships, upper classes or those with privileges. It is also produced through the relationships between powerful and weaker nations. The institutionalised rule of force produces counter-force. Human rights of self-determination and political co-determination are suppressed and they can only be asserted in revolutionary terms. Here, too, hopeless spirals develop: after the failure of reforms or revolutions the oppressors are better organized, and successful revolutions often organize new oppression. The growth of organized force and spontaneous counter-force is a threatening sign. No less threatening is the vicious circle of the international arms race. Whereas previously military deterrent systems have secured peace, their escalation is now leading towards instability. The predictable arms race is an open spiral upwards into nothingness. Mistrusts and interests in hegemony make the armament race a deadly threat to the world. Political violence, roughly defined, is a considerable or destroying use of force prohibited by law, directed to a change in politics, personnel or system of government and hence also directed to changes in the existence of individuals in the society and perhaps other societies<sup>3</sup>.

Legal structure is very much dependent on the political; and very often it plays into the hands of the political structure and

becomes oppressive like any other structures. With legal structure is associated meting out justice to every human person. When the legal structure fails to dispense this justice to every citizen there takes place the perpetration of legal violence. Justice is a profound concept which enwombs the great values of liberty, equality and human dignity. Every human being has a title to human rights, economic justice and emancipation from an exploitative order.

Today the legal system is at the service of the higher-ups and the bureaucracy, and not for the protection of the oppressed and marginalised people; this is the situation prevailing especially in our country. Nearly half of the Indian people live below the poverty line and are denied the comforts necessary to support life. The dignity of the individual has important components; sub-human conditions, which are the lot of the lowly and the lost, are a negation of personhood. Life and liberty are cherished values under Article 21. The six freedoms set out in Article 19 are non-negotiable and inalienable. Forced labour is anathema to the Indian legal culture and trafficking in human beings is forbidden by the Constitution; so is untouchability. Equality before law, equal opportunities for development, gender justice in the sense of dynamic equality for the female sex, the promise to the worker and tiller of elimination of exploitation — these are fundamental guarantees under the Paramount Parchment<sup>5</sup>.

Change is the law of life and obsolescent instrumentalities only obstruct. Most of us are painfully aware that our justice system has several limitations; it has to develop new capabilities and social directions before it can play its rightful role. Law is the means and justice the end. And so, a dynamic jurisprudence responding to the demands of social justice under Third World conditions, is the *desideratum*. How can the Socialist Republic of India deliver justice to the crores of crawling slum dwellers, pavement dwellers, hungry agrestics, *soshits* and *dalits* without the bulk of judges sharing a socialist passion as articulated in the democratic mission of the constitution? The judge's unconscious plays an enormous role in the exercise of the judicial process, particularly where it closely touches contemporary economic and social problems<sup>6</sup>. Though accession to justice is everyone's right, the extensive and intricate formalities to reach the court are being sloughed off. Unless the legal system shifts its centre of gravity

and focuses on the struggle of the people, it becomes an oppressive system and contributes to the structural violence.

Another vicious circle of violence is racial and cultural alienation. Men are adaptable and compliant once they have been robbed of their identity and characteristics, and have been degraded to the point of becoming manipulable factors in the system. They are then shaped by the image of their rulers. There can be no conquest of poverty and oppression without the liberation of men from their racial, cultural and technocratic alienation. The oppressors destroy the culture of the oppressed ones and try to impose a culture alien to them. The colonies of various European countries experienced such a denudation of culture. In some cases the original people's culture has been almost wiped out. The alienation of people from their culture becomes complete through the technocratic development which is presented as the only way to overcome poverty. Men then survive in relative freedom but they no longer know who they really are. They become apathetic cogs in a technocratic mega-machine<sup>1</sup>. Caught up in such a situation the violence continues at the social and cultural levels.

Religious structure is another level at which violence goes on in the name of the 'holiest' activity — religion. Religion which should have been the cause and bond of unity, peace and harmony, seems to be dividing the people. This is a time in which we experience untold violence in the name of religion. In the name of a symbol or a statue, the birth place of a god, a church, a mosque or a temple we do not mind killing hundreds of our fellowmen. Religion which should advocate love is made use of to propagate hatred. In the name of religion various fanatics commit innumerable atrocities and we, the so-called peace-loving people, keep mum in the name of 'peace'. At the time of Jesus too there were Zealots who wanted to bring about an overthrow of Roman domination, for which they tried to muster all powers at their disposal in the name of religion. In fact Jesus wanted a revolution which was far more radical. He questioned every sphere of life, political, economic, social and religious. Current ideas about what was right and just were shown to be loveless and therefore contrary to the will of God<sup>2</sup>. Jesus did not criticise the Zealots for being too political; he criticised them together with the Pharisees and Essenes for being too religious. It was their zeal for the law of God that drove them to assassinate Jews who

betrayed their religion (and therefore their nation) and to take up arms against the pagan intruder. What led the Pharisees to persecute and oppress the poor and sinners was religious fanaticism. The Essenes' hatred for unclean Jews was religiously inspired<sup>9</sup>. Jesus attacked the semblance of religion as is seen in the parable of the pharisee and the publican at prayer. He condemns the pharisee, for all religious practices and beliefs without compassion are useless and empty and violence-generating.

When politics and religion go hand in hand, religion becomes a tool in the hand of the oppressor; and history amply provides evidence for that. One of the basic causes of oppression, discrimination and suffering in Jesus' society, and our own, is religion — the loveless religion. And nothing is more impervious to change than religious zeal. Jesus soon discovered that it was the dutiful religious man, rather than the sinner or pagan Roman who was an obstacle to the coming of the kingdom of total liberation<sup>10</sup>.

At this juncture I would like to highlight the 'institutional violence' the Church and other religions practise. Almost all religions depend on various types of institutions for their furtherance and activities. These institutions which should become places of justice and love, in fact, practise various types of injustice and oppression. In schools, colleges, hospitals etc., the rights of the employees are daily violated. They are exploited ruthlessly and in a systematic manner disregarding all labour laws. In the name of 'charity' justice is violated. The employees are kept in temporary posts years together and they are paid far below the just wages. In certain institutions they are denied the right to form themselves into a union, which is a basic right of the workers. Those who point out such injustices are considered marxists and naxalites by the established religion. Thus religion contributes to a form of violence against which there is very little possibility of a struggle.

### Human Rights and Violence

The term *right* is ambiguous. In one sense to have a right means to have something which is conceded and enforced by the law of the realm. Such rights may be called *positive* rights. What is characteristic of them is that they are recognized by positive law. In another sense the word 'right' is different from positive right, and much closer to the ideas of deserts or justice; such a right is a moral right. A moral right is not necessarily enforced.

When I say that I have a right to receive a decent salary it is not to say I *do* receive one. We are most acutely conscious of a moral right when it is *not* being conceded. Immanuel Kant once said that we are most keenly aware of a moral duty when it is at variance with what we wish, or feel inclined, to do!!.

The term human rights is a twentieth century name for what has been traditionally known as natural rights, or the rights of man. Various countries enacted laws regarding human rights and considered certain rights as basic rights of man. Where human rights are upheld by positive law, they are both moral rights and positive rights. But it is essential to keep in mind the distinction between the empirical and the normative, between the realm of fact and that of morality. An important characteristic of moral rights is that they are *universal*. Human rights are rights which belong to man simply because he is man.

There is the universal declaration of *Human Rights* by the U. N. O. The charter has reaffirmed its faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women. Articles 1-29 speak of various rights which belong to human beings irrespective of creed, caste, sex, race, language, nation etc. All human beings are free and equal in dignity and rights. All have the right to life, liberty, and security of person. All are equal before law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of a state, and there is right to asylum in case of persecution. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. All have the right to freedom of opinion and expression which includes also the right to receive informations and ideas. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association. All have a right to work and to receive equal pay for equal work. All have the right to education and to participate in cultural life of the community. These are some of the important rights mentioned in the Charter. In this paper we have no intention to enter into a detailed analysis of human rights.

Here mention may be made of some important sections of people who are denied the basic rights as human beings. The first is that of women. In spite of the fact that the Charter of human rights speaks of equality of sex, and all the constitutions of various nations, and particularly of India, speak of rights

ir-respective of caste, creed, sex etc., the sad fact remains that women in general are un-free especially in the underdeveloped and developing countries. Very often religious theories have held woman a slave. Woman is still unfree, exploited, sold as commodity, liquidated without the law, and held hostage by an exploitative combination. Gender justice is the concern of all of us, and we must battle for the cause of freedom and development of the feminine sector as an integral and strategic part of the struggle for human justice. As Robert Ingersoll once wrote, "There will never be a generation of great men until there has been a generation of free women — of free mothers"<sup>12</sup>.

Woman in India remains bound and she needs to be set free. Political parties and religious associations speak of freedom for women. The myth is that the equality of the sexes is guaranteed by the state, but in fact inequality and indignity *vis-à-vis* Indian sisterhood are writ so large as to mar our solemn proclamation of Fundamental rights.

The Constitution has long ago abolished slavery and forced labour, but we know what is happening. Law has abolished dowry, but what does the brides' burning indicate? More than decades ago a toothless law was made against dowry but not only has the evil flourished without fear, bride burning and dowry deaths continue unabated bringing enough horror and terror in the daily newspaper. Rape is a crime long since, but gang rape and rape in police stations take place, and judges do not find in those lonely atrocities, proof beyond reasonable doubt. Even police officials and legislators justify trade-in-flesh and child prostitution. *Sati* abolished in the last century is continued even now under the religious garb. Witch-hunting and wife-beating are daily on the increase. Even educated and employed women find it hard to get along well with husbands, in-laws etc. It is painful to remind oneself of societal degeneracy regarding pornos racket which catches indigent girls in the coils of pecuniary temptation and offer of salvation from rural starvation. And once in the vicious web, the spiders never permit escape from the under world. The brothels, the call-girls, massage-parlours, night clubs and other nocturnal female shops, are unconscionable bonded labour operations where artless daughters are unwarily lured into serfdom and tearful 'pleasure'. Besides these, still there exists the *devadasi* system under cover and protection of religion. Our consciences have

become so insensitive that we are not shocked at all by these crimes committed on women<sup>13</sup>. In the Church too there is oppression of women, both lay and religious. Women are still considered as second rate citizens, and religious women are very systematically exploited by the authorities.

Another group that is ruthlessly exploited is children. The needs of the children are not recognised, nor are their rights respected. They figure, if at all, very low on the priorities of governments the world over. Children's civil, social and economic rights need to be defined clearly to protect them from heartless exploitation and to ensure their growth and development, both physical and mental. According to UNICEF more than 100 million children will die from illness and malnutrition in the 1990's. These deaths will be occurring mainly in developing countries, unless drastic measures are taken to prevent them, for which backing of the industrialised world is necessary. The estimated budget is \$ 2.5 billion a year. According to UNICEF it is possible to mobilise the amount provided there is political will and public pressure. The sum is mere two percent of the poor world's own arms spending.

The age of indifference to children will be a thing of the past if the governments of countries, both developed and developing, implement the decision taken at the summit of their leaders in New York on Sept. 29, 1990. The convention spoke of *civil rights* of children which include protection from torture and ill-treatment; the *economic rights*, the right to benefit from social security and proper living and protection from exploitation at work; the *social rights* include the right to good health, to education, medical services, protection from abduction and sexual exploitation providing them with basic facilities to ensure their growth and development. Our country has to make an all out effort to help her children; she has the highest number of children — 300 million out of the world's 900 million children. The government and voluntary agencies should come forward to protect the rights of children and help them grow as human beings full of beauty and health<sup>14</sup>. If we have a look at the slums of our big cities we see children live on the level of a sub-human existence. Let us search our conscience as to what we do for our future citizens.

Another section of people against whom oppression is unleashed is the underprivileged or *dalits*. The scheduled castes and tribes live at the mercy of upper-castes and the rich. They are

systematically exploited by the political parties, bureaucracy and the religious groups. The oppressive caste system holds under its clutches millions of India's underprivileged. The cries for deliverance have never reached the portals of courts, and whatever crimes committed on them have been wiped out under the influence of money and power. From a historical point of view the protest systems of thought and action have been systematically eliminated and a supremacy of higher castes emerged. The theory of *karma* was invoked to justify the atrocities committed on the lower castes. The portals of temples of knowledge became inaccessible to these and thus they remained entrenched in the quagmire of illiteracy, and when religion joined hands with the oppressive system and justified it, their lot was interpreted as their fate. At present there is a glimmer of hope through the awakening *dalits* receive from social activists and political parties.

### Need for a Revolutionary Theology

After having considered various forms of structural violence and how the violation of basic rights of human beings contributes to violence, let us analyse what type of revolutionary theology we need to counteract the various forms of violence that are at work. Our theology has been too much of a *descending one* in the sense that God was seen up above imparting to us His *grace* to respond to Him through revelation. Today we have come to realize that God is among us especially among the poorest. He is more in the slums than in the mighty decorated churches. He is in the midst of the ordinary people than in the assembly of religious heads who bicker and quarrel on rites and rituals unmindful of the people who struggle to have a square meal a day.

In a situation where basic rights are denied to people theology has no other option but to shout for help to the oppressed. Where theology fails to do so it becomes an exercise of a curious intellect. The theology of today has to be one based on human rights. In its preaching the Church has to make sure that her message is not merely that of reconciliation or adjustment with the existing situation but rather a loud proclamation of the power of the crucified. As someone has said: "Either the Church preaches the Crucified Christ, or else it crucifies Christ as it preaches." How true these words are! The tragedy of the Churches today is their unwillingness to be humiliated for the sake of others and their desire of exaltation for themselves.

If today the Church has to present a meaningful way of living, it is to reincarnate Jesus. Jesus was not a pacifist, nor did he advocate simple tolerance of the inhuman activity. As the incident in the temple amply shows he was enraged with the trafficking in religion. He had no authority within the system nor did he appeal to the authority of God as the prophets would have done. Jesus felt a call within himself to perform a 'cleansing' which he felt as the command of the Father. Hence he had no other option left. In a violence-ridden society it is almost impossible to bring about changes without having recourse to certain form of violence. The injunctions to turn the other cheek and not to resist evil are often quoted out of context. They do not exclude violence as such, they exclude violence for the purpose of revenge. The question that can be asked is: Will not conversion and liberation in some circumstances, call for the use of force and violence?

We do not know what Jesus would have done in every possible circumstance. But we can surmise that if there had been no other way of defending the poor and the oppressed and if there had been no danger of an escalation of violence, his unlimited compassion might have overflowed into violent indignation. But the kingdom of total liberation for all men cannot be established in violence but by faith. Faith as we know is not a way of speaking or a way of thinking, it is a way of living and can only be adequately articulated in a living *praxis*. To acknowledge Jesus as our Lord and Saviour is meaningful only in so far as we try to live as he lived and to order our lives according to his values. Jesus did not regard the truth as something to be 'upheld' and 'maintained', but as something to be lived and experienced. So our search, like his, is primarily a search for *orthopraxis* rather than *orthodoxy*. We cannot merely repeat what Jesus said or did, but we can begin to analyse our times in the same spirit as he analysed his. We would have to begin as Jesus did, with compassion for the starving millions, for those who are humiliated and rejected, and for the billions who will in future suffer because of the way we live today. Faith in Jesus without respect and compassion for man is a lie. Searching for the signs of the times in the spirit of Jesus will mean recognising all the forces that work against man as the forces of evil. We shall have to try to understand the structures of evil in the world as

it is today. How much have we been basing ourselves upon the worldly values of money, possessions, prestige, status, privilege, power and upon group solidarities of family, race, class, party, religion and nationalism? When these constitute our value system we have nothing in common with Jesus<sup>15</sup>.

### The Right to Protest

I would like to stress another point which is indicated in the third part of the title of my paper, namely, the right to protest or dissent. In political and legal circles one may call it 'civil disobedience'. It is a protest against unjust formal laws. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with moral law. Any law that uplifts human personality is just, and any law that degrades human personality is unjust. All segregation statutes are unjust because segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality. It gives the segregator a false sense of superiority and the segregated a false sense of inferiority. In the words of Martin Buber, the famous Jewish philosopher, we may say, segregation substitutes an I – It relation for the I – Thou relationship and ends up relating persons to the status of things<sup>16</sup>. This is the principle that guided Martin Luther King (Jr.) to protest against the segregation in the United States and urges Nelson Mandela and the black brethren to fight against apartheid in South Africa. Even if segregation or discrimination laws are legislated by the highest court or the highest religious authority they are to be disobeyed because they are against the dignity of human person.

In India Gandhiji started the non-cooperation movement as a protest against unjust laws. When a personal law is fiendish it is void in all good conscience and must be resisted without 'violence'. It is not done by derailing trains, throwing bombs in streets and killing humble innocents, as some pseudo-heroes heartlessly boast about, nor by sabotage and destruction of vital services as midget leaders-cum-cowards do. This thesis was expounded by Gandhiji in his Ahmedabad trial<sup>17</sup>.

An important point to be born in mind is that protest or dissent is part of obedience. This point is not very often grasped by some theologians and authorities. Our obedience is to God or Christ and the Gospel values, and when violation of important values like justice, love or dignity of the human person takes place, even if the highest authority does it, we have the right and duty to protest. If we do not, we are 'disobedient'.

Very often *dissent* is not permitted in the name of peace and harmony. But the question arises in the face of continued structural violence, what is the meaning of peace and harmony? Is it not an approval of existing violence as contributing towards a 'peace' which is no peace at all? We remain apathetic to the sufferings of people and preach for understanding, harmony and peace which have no relevance at all. The Church has to take into account the right of the people to protest and must support the struggles of the oppressed people for justice. If this does not happen Church will lose all relevance. Julius Nyerere spells out the mission of the Church: "...We should accept the fact that the development of the peoples means rebellion. At a given and decisive point in history men decide to act against those conditions which restrict their freedom as men. Unless we participate actively in the rebellion against those social structures and economic organizations which condemn men to poverty, humiliation and degradation, the christian religion will degenerate into a set of superstitions accepted by the fearful. Unless the Church, its members and its organizations express God's love for man by involvement in constructive protest against the present conditions of man, then it will become identified with injustices and persecution. If this happens it will die, and humanly speaking deserves to die, because it will serve no purpose comprehensible to modern man"<sup>18</sup>.

In India today evangelization means making the oppressed classes and castes aware of their oppression and fight for their liberation. Above all this is what the Church must aim to do — restoring dignity to the oppressed man. We should take a prophetic stance in the struggles of the poor and the underprivileged. The Church needs a revolutionary theology and revolutionary action in the world of oppression, injustice, hatred and disunity. Vatican II has urged the Church to read the signs of the times and act accordingly. But she not only does not do this, but oppresses those who play the prophetic role. How many theologians and priests are made to 'keep quiet' because their message and life are too powerful protests against the bureaucratic structures of the Church. Also many who are in authority keep others like women religious in a form of slavery in the name of proper functioning of the Church. Today we need prophets who are capable of performing the twin function of *denouncing* and *announcing* — denunciation of every dehumanizing situation which is contrary to

brotherhood, justice and liberty and announcing the kingdom of peace and justice. The Church must criticize every sacralization of oppressive structures to which she herself might have contributed.

What the Church needs today is a revolutionary ideology whence revolutionary action can flow. Very often the Church is afraid of revolution. She is content to remain a reactionary. A revolutionary is closer to truth than a reactionary, because the former sees reality in terms of the future instead of the past. The former is a child of light, the latter of darkness. We cannot be Christians in the world today without to some extent being also revolutionaries. As Karl Rahner says, we fail to be prophets and are content with setting up monuments to the prophets in order to avoid having to obey what they preached<sup>19</sup>.

In the light of theology mentioned above we need to reconsider the celebration of our sacraments. A proper celebration of them should provide us with the prophetic stamina, the driving force to break the institutional structures. They can be means to enforce justice. They are liberative and have a bearing upon the praxis of the Christian way of liberation. If this is so, the sacraments are valid and efficacious to the extent that they make us conscious and motivate the celebration of human liberative action in history<sup>20</sup>. In the past, and even today, the sacraments are often experienced solely in terms of the inner life and cultic worship. They did not lead to transformation of one's interpersonal relationships; neither did they inspire people to overcome structural injustices. But today sacramental activity should involve an ethical concern for justice; otherwise our worship itself can become productive of 'violence'. In this context we must ask ourselves how we celebrate the Eucharist, the centre of all sacraments? The silent agony of the plundered poor and the compassionate anger of God for their sake find expression there. Participating meaningfully in the Eucharist brings to the Christian community an urgent responsibility to take concrete action to alleviate world hunger. As food, the Eucharist calls on one's responsibility to foster life and to fight against conditions which perpetuate starvation. Christ's presence in the hungry world (Mt. 25:35) and his presence in the Eucharist (1 Cor. 12:23-36) must be seen as complementary. As Pedro Aruppe says: "In the Eucharist we receive Christ hungering in the world. He comes to us, not alone, but with the poor, the oppressed, the starving of the earth. Through

him, they are looking at us for help, for justice, for love expressed in action. Therefore we cannot properly receive the Bread of Life, unless at the same time we give bread for life to those in need wherever and whoever they may be"<sup>21</sup>. It is worthwhile to ask whether our sacramental theology has such a revolutionary ring.

## Conclusion

The present time is an opportune time for action. Violence is rampant. For us the impending catastrophe is total and definitive. It is the event which defines our time; it is our *eschaton*. But if we allow it to shake the very foundations of our life, we may find that Jesus has awakened in us the faith and the hope to see the signs of the kingdom in our midst, to see our *eschaton* as an either-or event and to see our time as the unique opportunity for the total liberation of mankind. God is speaking to us in a new way today. He is speaking to us in the events and problems of our time. Today the Church must accept the task of proclaiming justice as her task. As U. S. bishops have said, "The concerns (of economic justice for all) are not all peripheral but to the central mystery at the heart of the Church. They are integral to the proclamation of the Gospel and part of every Christian today" (Economic Justice for All, 60). The same fact was asserted years ago by the synod of Bishops 1971: "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world are constitutive dimensions of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race" (Justice in the World, 6). In announcing such justice against violence, the Church should be ready to suffer as Jesus did. Jesus' preaching and enacting of the coming reign of God posed a threat to the established religions and civil power. In love and fidelity to the compassionate will of his Abba, Jesus acted. Since peace and justice are among the most powerful signs of the reign of God present in this world, it belongs to the essential mission of the Church to make these realities more visible in our time so marked by oppression, violence and injustice, and threat of total destruction. Under the impulse of a spirituality of justice, we are realizing in a new way that the gracious power of the incarnate Word and risen Christ cannot be limited to the personal and interpersonal realms alone, but includes the body politic, the social systems which we create and which in turn shape us. We are learning to love this world deeply and at the same time to be profoundly critical of its

self-destructive and unjust tendencies. We are finding that in the struggle for justice and peace the moral and the religious converge, and experiencing in this struggle our union with God is constituted<sup>22</sup>.

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### Foot Notes

- 1 Here I depend on an article by Amalendu Guha and Adrian Nastase, 'Human Duties, Human Rights and Human Needs', *Gandhi Marg*, Feb. 1982, pp. 638-639.
- 2 Jurgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, (London: S. C.M Press ('76) p. 330
- 3 Ibid. pp. 330-331
4. Honderich, *Violence for Equality*, p. 23
- 5 Justice V. R. Krishna Iyer, *Human Rights and the law*, (Indore: Vedpal Law House, 1986), pp. 195-196
6. Ibid. pp. 196-198
- 7 Moltmann, *Crucified God*, p. 331
- 8 Albert Nolan, *Jesus Before Christianity*, (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1985), p. 97
9. Ibid. p. 98
10. Ibid.
- 11 See Cranston, *Human Rights*, pp. 4-5
- 12 See Krishna Iyer, *Human Rights and the law*, p. 31
- 13 There are beautiful studies done on "Atrocities on Women" in the two issues of *Illustrated Weekly of India*. See July 31-August 6, 1988, Sept. 24-30, 1989. The studies are well documented with case-histories. See also Krishna Iyer, *Human Rights and the law*, pp. 33-35
- 14 See R. Akhileswari, "Tender lives on Tenterhooks", *Deccan Herald*, Bangalore Oct. 7, 1990
- 15 See Albert Nolan, *Jesus Before Christianity*, pp. 110-111, 139-140
- 16 See Krishna Iyer, *Human Rights and the law*, p. 312.
17. See Ibid. p. 313
- 18 Julius Nyerere, "In Man and Development", and also in his address to the Maryknoll Sisters in their General Chapter, New York, 1970
- 19 Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations* Vol. 14, Translated by David Bourke, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1976), p. 276
- 20 See J. L. Segundo, *The Sacraments Today* (New York: Maryknoll, Orbis, 1974), pp. 53-59
- 21 As quoted by George Therukattil, "The Eucharist: Prophetic Energiser for Socio-political Commitment to Integral Liberation", *Vidyajyoti*, Vol. 54 (1990) pp. 333-342. Also see his article: "The Eucharist: Prophetic Energiser for Christian Living", *Vidyajyoti* 54 (1990) pp. 189-194
- 22 See Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Consider Jesus: Waves of Renewal in Christology* (New York: Cross Road Publishing Company, 1990), pp. 76-80

# Violence and Struggle for Justice

The problem of Christian responsibility in respect of force and violence is quite old. It has appeared in such different forms over the centuries as in the question of, to mention a few instances, martyrdom in the early Church, Christian military service, just war, tyrannicide and obedience to unjust civil authorities. In all these cases the tormenting question has been this: How can Christians, children of the heavenly Father and followers of Jesus Christ, live and act in a world where the use of force and violence against injustice seems unavoidable?

Today, however, this problem has assumed a new urgency for various reasons. First, the Churches and Christians are becoming ever more aware that they have seldom been on the side of the poor and the downtrodden, that they have often supported the powers of an unjust social order, that they have often profited from the poverty of others, and that they have often used force against those who differed from them in belief or ideology.:

Secondly, thousands of Christians are confronted with the agonizing question whether they should join the poor and the oppressed of their own lands in a violent movement to overthrow an unjust social order that seemingly cannot be changed in any other way, or they should remain passive and thereby be responsible for the continuing injustice.

Thirdly, Christians find themselves collaborating with those of other faiths and ideologies in the work of setting up a just social order. Far from being content merely with binding up human wounds, they feel urged to attack the causes of these wounds in the collective selfishness and unjust structures of society. This leads them to choices about the use of unavoidable force and violence in conditions which they cannot always control, but where they must act.

Fourthly, violence seems to have become endemic in our daily life. Television, film and literature make us accustomed to violent scenes and actions. Police brutality and the use of force have become ordinary in civil life. In several countries military

considerations take precedence over economic and political ones. In some, military regimes have taken over. Among the poor and young people in many countries we observe a high rate of murder, assault, and other crimes. With its pervasiveness, violence seems to condition people in a way that blinds them to peaceful options even in personal relationships.

Fifthly, there is the mystique of violence which holds that even within democratic societies violence and the threat of violence have certain necessary functions. Lewis Coser, for instance, has argued that violence has three social functions in any society: the manifest function of achievement, the latent function of danger signal and the latent function of catalyst<sup>1</sup>. Violence functions as achievement, particularly among underdogs, because it is the most direct form of action and is also accessible. It is, therefore, an attractive alternative road to the achievement of status or power to those who have either limited or no access to the normal channels of achievement and the exercise of power in society. Coser goes on to note that revolutionary violence can be understood in much the same way. It offers the alienated and the oppressed an opening to humankind and a positive identity that has been closed to them by their confinement within the operating social system. Violence can also be the clearest and the most effective sign that there are serious problems within a social system that must be corrected. It is, of course, true that the problems can be identified by methods short of violent ones, but experience has shown clearly that all the appeals of moralists and all the warnings of social scientists do not serve to pinpoint the malfunctioning of the system to the general public nearly so well as one violent disorder. This means also that violence may well serve as a catalyst for social change.

## I. Christian Response to Violence in General

As Christians we seek in the Bible and especially in the words and deeds of Jesus Christ clarity about how we have to go about in a world of violence. Ultimately, Jahweh is a God who is merciful (Ex 34:6-7). In the Psalms God curses those who love violence and war. In Amos, all those who practise unnecessary violence even against enemies, who attack pregnant women, practise usury and oppress the poor come under God's malediction. In the figure of the messianic king warlike images give way to

peaceful ones. The ideal king comes seated on an ass, symbol of humility and peace, rather than on a horse which suggested power and war. Finally, there is the song of the suffering servant who accepts violence with no counterviolence and in whom Christians saw Jesus prefigured.

An objection may be raised as regards the violence apparent in the OT. No doubt, one can point to the law of "eye for eye, tooth for tooth" (Dt 19:21), and holy wars which sacralized the extermination of enemies (Dt 20:17). Actually, "eye for eye" represented an effort to limit unrestrained vendetta. The stories about wars of total annihilation seem to be later theological constructions. The Canaanites, for instance, did not in fact disappear. The overall vision of Deuteronomy humanized and limited total war. Even when OT talked about Jahweh as Lord of hosts, it didn't mean Lord of the armies of Israel but rather Lord of the hosts of heavens, Lord of creation, Lord of Israel and of all others<sup>2</sup>.

We have clear evidence that Jesus did not use violence on behalf of the weak, the poor and the suffering against the powerful even though he identified himself with the former and found them lending a ready ear to the Gospel, nay, he himself suffered the unjust violence of the powerful to the point of dying on the cross.

The NT prohibits not only revenge but any form of grudge or vindictive justice. Love of enemy is not just a divine commandment for all; it is the heart of God's own economy of salvation, fully manifest in Jesus Christ. Consequently, it is a central dimension of discipleship in the footsteps of Jesus and in the image and likeness of the Father. Life in Jesus Christ is unthinkable without an active and creative love of enemies, with the hope to rescue them and be reconciled with them. The redeeming love revealed in Jesus Christ is essentially an all-embracing love that also rescues and heals the enemy from violence and hatred, and wins him over for God's reign of love. God does not beat back. In his Son, Jesus, he suffers the beating which the sinner has deserved.

The victory of Jesus' reconciling and redeeming love was won, in the midst of a hostile and extremely violent world, by his prayer on the cross "Father, forgive". Jesus, who has shown this love to us, who by our sins were his enemies, does invite

us to share in this love and live it in our relationship with our enemies. Only by accepting this call, do we offer the world an idea of true faith in God who is love and compassion.

The early Church was non-violent. There is a significant difference between Christian attitude toward violence before Constantine and after. Upto about A. D. 170 Christians seemed to take Jesus' call to non-violence literally. Then we begin to notice reference to Christian soldiers, but also cases of conscientious objection to military service and opposition from various Church Fathers. The opposition rested on the incompatibility of war with Jesus' message of love.

The Church of the first three centuries forbade the shedding of blood which even public opinion had allowed. Arnobius, an early Christian writer, even said that it would be better to shed one's own blood than to sully one's hands and conscience with the blood of another. The Canons of Hippolytus insisted that a soldier should be instructed not to kill anyone and to refuse to do so if commanded to. Furthermore, these canons say that a soldier who becomes a catechumen must promise not to take part in capital punishment, and any official who had the power of the sword should be excluded from the catechumenate altogether.

Christianity thus stands for non-violence even in the transformation of society. Christianity is not against revolution as such, since revolution need not necessarily be violent. Revolution is no more than a special way of changing conditions, structures and institutions to Man's advantage. Bearers and instruments of peace, heirs to the messianic promises, Christians do not believe in violence. Violence shows that the influence of God's kingdom is still minimal.

Non-violence is not to be misconstrued as non-resistance. Nor is it passivity and resignation in the face of violence and injustice. Jesus did resist evil. He did not run away from his opponents. Nor did he give in to them. In fact, he actually raised the level of conflict by openly siding with the poor and the oppressed against the established authorities. In word and action (prophetic act of casting out money-changers from the temple) he denounced the personal and institutional oppression, both civic and religious of his day. In doing so he brought down violence on his own head.

Active nonviolence counters evil through ways other than violence. Nonviolence not only resists evil, but, if properly employed, resists it more effectively than violence does. Indeed, nonviolent resistance is ideally the only really effective resistance to injustice and evil. As Mahatma Gandhi perceived, the oppressed or enslaved class or nation must not only liberate themselves but the oppressors also. There is a mutual enslavement, one very comfortable and one very uncomfortable; one perhaps imperceptible to the outsider and the other relatively perceptible. But the oppressor is also enslaved, however comfortably and imperceptibly, by the structures which he dominates. Gandhi's hope and strategy was to achieve mutual emancipation. Only in this way he thought could the demon of violence be truly exorcised from the structures, the ambiguity considerably diminished and true liberation and reconciliation achieved.

The basic principle of nonviolence is respect for the personal conscience of the opponent. Nonviolent action is a way of insisting on one's just rights without violating the rights of anyone else. In many instances, nonviolence offers the only possible way in which this can be effected. The whole strength of nonviolence depends on the absolute respect for the rights even of an otherwise unjust oppressor, his legal rights and his moral rights as a person.

Non-violent resistance is the Christian way *par excellence* to resist evil. It remains the ideal. But this ideal cannot always be realized owing to sinful circumstances. Non-violence as a strategy will work only so long as people concerned agree to be reasonable. Reasonableness means that one is ready to take others' views and needs into consideration, an acceptance of the fact that many minds and many viewpoints are needed to assess the realities of any situation and to decide on appropriate courses of action. When the genuine needs of others are ignored, when the talking becomes merely a façade of reasonableness to cover raw power lust, then those who dissent must either put up with their frustration and resentment or must resort to force and violence. The general history of the human race certainly offers no support for the supposition that turning the other cheek always produces good effects on the aggressor. Some aggressors, such as the Nazis, were apparently just egged on by the pacifist attitude of their victims. Some of the S. S. men apparently became curious to see

just how much torture the victim would put up with before he began to resist. Thus non-violence might work against some people, it might fail against some others (e.g. the Nazis).

As Helmut Thielicke observes, even Gandhi held that it was in a *specific situation* that non-violence is the best strategy for attaining the end in view. The dynamics of non-violent resistance is grounded on the philosophical axiom that honesty is the best policy, to act according to the truth is to act wisely, and the means that are pure are the means best adapted to the end in view. Thus Gandhi's preaching of non-violence implies the pragmatic conception of moral warfare, the mobilization of forces which, though secret, are nonetheless effective in attaining the intended goal.

Consistent non-reaction has effect on the enemy. If he sees himself compelled by the passivity of his opponent to be only an inflicter of suffering, unable to establish the validity of his own cause by doing some suffering himself, this drains from him the passion for his cause. It tears him apart morally, and also pulls out from under him the launching platform which is basic to the exercise of his physical superiority. When the enemy is forced into the position where he can only act, and is never involved in the tension of action and reaction, his unilateral action simply runs itself to death. "If we carry out this doctrine in practice", says Gandhi, "the British government will be forced to succumb. The suppression will lose its edge because there is no reaction, just as an arm outstretched to strike is dislocated if it finds nothing there to hit."

Gandhi's campaign is set within the sphere of a historical situation which by its special structure seemed to command the attitude of forbearance, patience, and non-violence also from a tactical standpoint. Thielicke feels that those who make Gandhi's principles the guiding principles of a general pacifism, thereby uprooting them from the solid soil of a concrete situation, are undoubtedly idealists. He calls attention to the specific situation within which Gandhi's pragmatic pacifism is legitimate. Three conditions set this particular situation apart from others: First, it is historically unique in form and scale. Its unprecedented character is what makes possible a surprise victory. It runs counter to the whole tradition as regards treatment of an opponent in matters involving colonial rule, conquest, war, and

police action. This is why the historical rules of military strategy could not be applied, and because they could not, the result had to be uncertainty and confusion, and the consequent loss of resolution and of ability to fight. There can be no doubt, however, that as this method of passive resistance becomes a general, acknowledged, and customary mode of conflict it will lose the strategic advantage it had in Gandhi's case and be met by appropriate counterstrategy.

Second, Gandhi himself is clear that the ethics of disposition, namely, doing what is right, and leaving the result to God, can bring political pressure to bear, and overcome the opponent, only under specific conditions; it cannot be applied unconditionally and blindly. The nonviolent method functions, according to Gandhi, only when it is practised by not too small a minority, and it functions best when practised by a numerically overwhelming majority. Thus the Indians were the vast majority compared with the numerically small forces of the British government. Forceful action of this kind demands great numerical strength.

Third, Gandhi's situation is perhaps the most important of the conditions which allowed his nonviolent method to succeed. This essential feature of the situation was that Gandhi had as his opponent a constitutional democracy. In spite of the questionable nature of British policies, men in charge could not act as if ethical norms were non-existent. It is true that they could wink at what was going on, as happens in politics. It is true that they could even use ethical principles as a pretext for very different and highly egoistic manipulations. All this was quite possible. What was not possible was that Gandhi's effort should make no impression on a political power which at bottom acknowledges ethical principles. Such a government is bound to be embarrassed and stymied when its opponent sets it so continually and publicly in the wrong, simply by acting according to distinctly ethical maxims and suffering.

Along with the strategic aim of having the opponent's physical power trickle away by being spread too thin there was the plan to cripple him morally, to which we referred earlier. Neither the officials on the scene nor public opinion back home — which was never left in the dark, as happens in totalitarian regimes — could in the long run endure being pictured as murderers and terrorists. Yet this was the picture that inevitably emerged as they continually had to seize "innocent" men, men of peace who put

up no resistance, who when they were reviled or dispersed or even shot down, did not revile in return. The penetrating demonstration of the Indians' good conscience while the British were forced to be the sole perpetrators of violence, unable to break the powerful resistance of the enemy at some personal cost and therefore with some moral justification, much less to act in self-defence, all this had a paralyzing effect on people who have even the remotest ideal of chivalry and pay at least some modest heed to conscience. For a humanitarian conscience it is quite intolerable that it should rampage like a beast of prey in a herd of sheep. This capitulation before what was intolerable was the goal towards which Gandhi's psychological strategy manoeuvred his opponents. He used their own virtues to render them helpless.

To conclude this section, the ideal of non-violence does not contain in itself all the answers to all our questions. These will have to be met amid the risks and anguish of day to day politics. But they can never be worked out if non-violence is not taken seriously. Even when involved in unavoidable conflict, Christians still have to retain an element of reconciliation between groups that are distressingly separated and opposed. A susceptibility to the absolute appeals of the Gospel gives the Christian a definite preference for non-violence. He does not allow himself to be carried away by revolutionary impatience.

## II. Christian Response to Violence in Extreme Cases

Is it lawful for Christians to use violence against injustice? May not one form of violence be met with another form? May not God sometimes urge people to fight for the deliverance of his oppressed poor just as he urged Moses to fight for the liberation of the 'chosen' people?

We must opt for a realistic ethics rather than for an idealistic one. Idealistic ethics is aimed at abstract ideals and their realization without regard for the concrete, historical situation. Idealistic ethics is concerned with ideas. It wants to propagate ideas without regard to their capacity to engender a corresponding social reality. The war between the northern and southern states in America offers us an example. The pure ideal of liberating the slaves was set up; but no one seriously thought out in advance what the Negro was to do with a merely legal freedom, whether this needed to be prepared and supplemented by practical social

measures. What seemed like a blessing was turned into a near tragedy. Realistic ethics takes account of the actual limitations. What is possible is the most that can be done. Before there can be harvest there must be fertile soil, and this must be cultivated. Those who adopt idealistic ethics would throw the seed to the winds, hoping that it would take root somewhere.

It is particularly characteristic of idealistic ethics to concentrate on isolated points: thus we have pacifists, abolitionists, prohibitionists, and all kinds of reformers. What they overlook is the fact that, although all positive ideals are unconditionally valid in the abstract, in their practical realization they must be linked up with the particular needs of an actual situation. Generally they need to be supplemented by the value at the opposite pole, so as to reach the "true mean", the productive synthesis of values. There can be a "tyranny" of the individual value which absorbs a person's whole attention and which can be checked only by a synthesis of values.

1) Jesus says "Do not resist one who is evil" (Mt 5:39). Many of those who reject as morally unlawful all violence base their arguments on the above statement of Christ, on his example in offering no resistance, allowing himself to be unjustly arrested, condemned and crucified and also on Paul's admonition in Romans 13:2. These sayings cannot possibly be construed as a moral excuse for passively enduring the evil and illegal acts of despotic authorities. There is a kind of regard for authority which calls for resistance. To suffer evil without resisting it is to push it to the recklessness of ever greater aggression, and to furnish it with the illusion of supposed validity.

Eberhard Welty sees in the OT a distinction between resistance movements that were not in accordance with God's will, for example those against which the prophet Jeremiah had to fight, and those that were clearly in accordance with God's will. The latter are explicitly praised in the books of Moses, Judges and Maccabees.

Regarding the NT, in almost all cases, Welty justly finds it a doubtful procedure to attempt to derive the whole wisdom of the Sacred Scripture from single words and sayings of our Lord. In particular, NT quite clearly commands the individual Christian to obey the rulers of this world (Rom 13:1f; Tit 3:1; 1 Pet 2:13f).

This obedience can only extend to matters in accordance with the natural law and with the revealed will of God, and in which the authority is competent. We have to render to Caesar only things that are Caesar's. Clearly not all things are Caesar's. Hence the NT indicates that the individual may be obliged to refuse obedience to secular authorities (Acts 4:13; 5:29). Our Lord's words "Resist not evil" must be considered within the context of all his sayings. There may be cases when the Christian, for the sake of Christ, should give way to unjust oppressors, handing over his coat and offering the other cheek. But what the individual may be able to do, perhaps be obliged to do, cannot be regarded as a general norm, since this would make an orderly community life quite impossible. The reason why Christ in his passion did not offer resistance to the civil authorities was undoubtedly that he willed his passion in order to make amends to the Father for the sins of the world and to redeem Man; he freely accepted the chalice which the Father offered him. No matter how long the world may last and how the history of humanity may develop, this situation in which Christ was placed by God remains unique. What alone may be compared with it is the vicarious suffering of expiation which chosen ones take upon themselves on account of their belief in Christ and in imitation of him. Moreover, we must remember that Christ did not offer the other cheek to the servant who struck him, but countered with the question of justice: why do you strike me?

Further, it is asked whether Our Lord himself did not require us to love our enemies, whether the whole of the Sermon on the Mount is not directed to the rigorous fulfilment of all the requirements of our heavenly Father without bargaining and without excuses.

Werner Schöllgen notes that the Greek language has two words for enemy. One of these, *polemios*, derived from *polemos*, war, is not used at all in the NT. The term used, *echthros*, derived from *echthra*, hatred, means the one who is hated, that is, a personal enemy. The Sermon on the Mount then forbids the poisoning of all personal relationships, including also those involved in war, by a real hatred directed toward individuals. Many pacifists feel that they have done something very important for peace by opposing military service and call for disarmament. In the mind of Christ, work for peace is of its nature spread over a much wider field. It fights against any discrimination against others which can give rise to hatred. Very much can be achieved by patient labour in destroying prejudice, in carefully explaining the meaning of diversities in habits and customs and, above all, in the wider organization of properly arranged and well-prepared personal contacts.

2) In the context of the Christian absolute of love, we are supposed to care about what happens to people. Our primary concern

should be to help the victims of violence and protect them from further harm. While the Christian ideal is reform by love and persuasion, our doctrine of sin informs us that force, violent or non-violent, is necessary to prevent evil and injustice. We need to be reminded that force can sometimes be used to achieve justice. In fact, the primary moral validity of force, non-violent or violent, is its use to restrain an unjust force. As we all know, many people and institutions will not change voluntarily but only under the threat of or the use of the needed force. One does not reason with a murderous psychopath.

3) Even the law recognizes some sort of justice in spontaneous outbursts of violence under extreme provocation. This is partly because it is natural to become violent in circumstances which appear to threaten seriously one's well-being or security; partly again because it is recognized that spontaneous outbursts in an individual or in a group under extreme provocation do not necessarily mean that the socially conditioned barriers to violence have been permanently eroded or broken. However, group outbursts are always more dangerous than individual ones because the violence of each individual in the group reinforces the violence in others. This is particularly the case in people whose behaviour is controlled more by the norms of social groups than by an interiorized system of values.

4) God works in history and gives it meaning. One of Christianity's greatest legacies has been the replacement of the cyclical-sacral content of a world going nowhere with the concept of a progressive history, namely, the belief that the world has a direction. This direction seen from the Scripture, is toward greater love, justice, and freedom for all Men, and culminate in the Parousia. In history God has often encountered moral intransigence that would budge before nothing less than violence. In these cases God did not hesitate to call Men to destroy existing institutions, even the most sacred of institutions, his own temple. In all likelihood, God is calling Men in our own age to overcome the moral intransigence of power structures as closed as those of the pre-exilic Jews.

5) Violence can be self-defence against official terrorism. Certain periods of history have been rightly dubbed "reigns of terror", for the principal characters who played official roles in them were terrorists who employed the methods of terrorism, under colour of law, to achieve their political objectives. Torquemada and Spanish Inquisitors tortured their victims and committed judicial murder on a massive scale. During the present period between roughly September 1793 and August 1794, the French experienced a reign of terror that has seldom been equalled anywhere. No more the name of Hitler need be mentioned to remind one of the most insane and brutal reigns of terror in all of history. If that is

insufficient, a few additional names may revive the reader's memory: Nuremberg, Lidice, Warsaw Ghetto, Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen, and Treblinka. Stalin and many of the czars who preceded him as absolute monarchs of the Russian people and their neighbours used terrorist tactics to acquire sovereignty or to keep it, and sometimes simply to demonstrate the totality of their power and the inexorability of their wills.

Structural terrorism can be as bad as, if not worse than, official state terrorism. In some countries the present social structures are so flagrantly oppressive and unjust, so closed to change, that they constitute a form of utmost violence. When democratic processes for social change either do not exist or are unworkable, and when people are in fact deprived of their fundamental human rights by a repressive structure, then violent and bloody rebellion may be the only way to achieve what are essentially moral ends. Here the choice is not between peace and violence, but between two types of violence: the present, hopeless, dead-end violence and one which could open to a just social structure.

In any consideration of violence, we must first point to the underlying violence, in the sense of any attack on the dignity of Man, which is built into the structure and institutions of our society. To maintain an established order of violence constitutes violence of a worse kind than a revolt against such an order. To refuse an armed rising against Hitler's establishment was to aid and abet the worst kind of violence, that of Auschwitz and Birkenau. Of what physical and spiritual oppression of Man did not one become an accomplice when preaching passivity and nonviolence in the czarist empire, that prison of peoples, that soul of a thousand years of oppression? In such cases we never have the choice between violence and non-violence but between two kinds of violence and nobody can spare us the responsibility of deciding in each case which violence is the least violent and the most fruitful for the enhancement of human dignity. To condemn the momentary violence of a slave in revolt is to become the accomplice of the permanent and silent violence of the one who keeps him in chain.

Liberal capitalism seems to be a form of institutional violence. In the words of Jaime Snoek, liberal capitalism is most to blame for the profound social irregularities of the present time. It manifests itself most of all in the speculations in raw materials on the international commodity markets, in a despoiling form of trade that forces the poor countries to pay high prices abroad for products manufactured from those same raw materials, in the trusts that stifle national industry etc. Only a trade that obeys an ethic of a world economy, an economy of the species, will be able to defeat the "satellization" of the Third World. Technical and financial assistance is given to it. But what is given is very little in

relation to what could be given. According to statistics it does not reach even one percent of the national income of the rich countries. These are just crumbs falling from the rich man's table. The rich, meanwhile, slaves to the tyranny of advertising, continue to consume much beyond the limits of what is useful and to defend their tables with the arms race.

6) There is no doubt that there can be just rebellions, just revolutions and just revolutionary violence for the same reasons for which there could be just wars in the past. We have the opinion of Church authorities. Dom Jorge, bishop of Santo Andres, Brazil, said that armed revolution by the people is justified when oppression rules and famine wages obtain<sup>4</sup>. Similarly, Mons. Fragoso, bishop of Crateus, Brazil, asserted that at times violence is the only possible way of liberating Man from an established, permanent, and grievous violence. We have to recognize that the mature conscience of the citizens has the right to opt for violence<sup>5</sup>. Bishop Marcos McGrath of Santiago de Veraguas, Panama, declared: "Each Christian must form his own conscience, but with an accurate knowledge of the situation he is in and a clear grasp of the principles and the dangers involved. He should look well, very well, before leaping. There must be real justification — as to the end, as to the means, as to a programme and as to the likelihood of success, not only of the overthrow of a regime but of the programme to follow. Let him remember that our greatest commandment is to love our neighbour. Even if violence may be chosen, we may not hate"<sup>6</sup>.

During 1966 and 1967 three major Christian conferences seemed to have reached a consensus on several principles concerning Christian participation in revolutionary violence. First, the Christian may participate in revolutionary violence which is a response to an intolerable social repression. Second, Christian participation in violence should be a last resort strategy employed after all other means of social change have proved futile. Third, Christian participation in revolutionary violence must seek a more just social order and not merely the destruction of one's opponent. Fourth, any Christian participation in overt violence, like Christian participation in war, must always be done in a "mournful mood" and in the hope of greater justice and peace<sup>7</sup>.

So we are not setting ourselves up as the standard-bearers of indiscriminate violence. Quite the reverse; we anguish at the thought that it is only by force that justice can be reestablished. But we feel obliged to assume the heavy responsibility the situation demands. It is not a matter of idealizing violence, but of adding a further dimension to the principle that has so often been proclaimed: that every unjustly oppressed community has a right to act against an unjust aggressor, with violence if need be. The aggression we are attacking is that of the oppressive structures now preventing the full and harmonious development of vast sections of

our people, and which, tacitly but effectively, reject all forms of bold transformations, innovations that go deep<sup>8</sup>.

### Conclusion

Any approach to violence has to relate it to all the attacks on human dignity from whatever source they may come. The ethical choice for a person in the contemporary social order is not between violence and nonviolence but between the degrees to which and the methods by which he shall exercise violence. This is easily seen when one recalls the various types of violence.

Christians reflecting on the dilemma of violence must avoid the trap of seeming to dictate strategies and tactics to people living in distant and different situations. No single one can have universal validity; and those who live outside a particular social conflict do well to be wary of handing out advice, when it is not they, but others who have to pay the price of following it. In particular, those who are comfortably placed on the social ladder must be aware of the severe limitations their position places on their giving moral advice to others less well placed.

The final judgment as to the use of violence as a suitable moral means of political change is to be left to the people concerned for rectifying the serious injustices in question. Outsiders can certainly help by way of dialogue with them and raising questions such as discussed here. They may not, however, offer any doctrinaire prohibition or endorsement.

It is important that the present widespread concern about violence and nonviolence should serve to highlight the larger challenge to all Christians to strive to translate their commitment to Christ into more vigorous social and political engagement for social justice.

Felix Podimattam

### Foot Notes

- 1 Lewis Coser, "Some Social Functions of Violence", *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, Vol. 364, March '66 p.8-18
- 2 Giuseppe Mattai, "Christians and Non-violence", *Theology Digest*, 31(1984) pp. 139-140
- 3 *Ibid.*, pp. 140-141
- 4 Cf. "Notes on Moral Theology", *Theological Studies*, 29 (1968) p. 692
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 Cf. Richard McCormick, *Notes on Moral Theology 1965 through 1980*, Washington, 1981, pp. 186-187
- 7 Cf. N. Brockman and N. Piediscalzi, eds., *Contemporary Religion and Social Responsibility*, New York, 1973, p. 232
- 8 Cf. Stan Lourdusamy, *Church and Social Justice*, Bangalore, 1979, pp.52-54

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